







HAIL! HAIL! ROCK'N'ROLL! THE MUSIC. THE

THE GREATEST OF ALL ROCK'N'ROLLERS... **IN HIS 90TH YEAR** 



THE STORY OF BURLESQUE PLUS! DITA VON TEESE **EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW** 

LIVE! DEKE DICKERSON \* SHARKS \* WILDEST CATS

**KILLER B-SIDES** 



### also inside.

**JOE CLAY BOZ BOORER BILLY HARLAN BOBBY CRAFFORD** THE BELLFURIES & MORE...









## VINTAGE\*ROCK

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Printed by Polestar

Tel +44 (0)1206 849500

Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd,
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London SEI OSU Tel +44 (0) 203 148 3000

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\*Calls cost 7 pence per minute plus your phone company's access charge

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Anthem Publishing is the proud home of Vintage Rock. Anthem was established in 2003 and also publishes Guitar & Bass Magazine, Music Tech Magazine and Music Tech Focus. www.anthem-publishing.com

## Welcome...

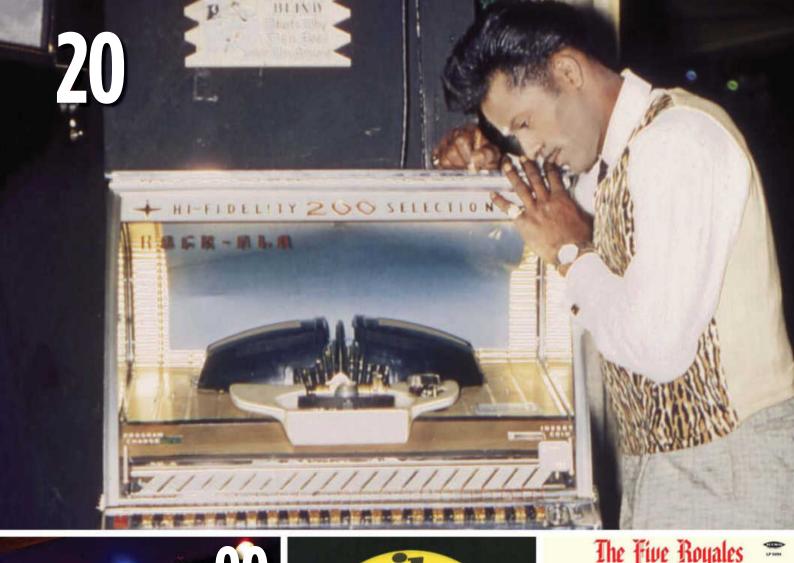
Chuck Berry was nothing short of a revelation. He's a heavyweight, and one that many feel has never been surpassed. The perennial *Johnny B. Goode* was top of the pile in our Top 100 singles poll by a country mile – partly down to its hypnotic rhythm, partly down to that unbeatable guitar riff (one that no doubt rings out across venues, rehearsal rooms, guitar shops and bedrooms throughout the planet on a daily basis), and partly down to lyrics that the everyman could easily relate to. In short, Berry had it all. The poet laureate of rock'n'roll, as he's often known, reaches the grand old age of 90 in October, and this issue we raise a glass in his direction and re-tell his story with fascinating insights from biographer and Berry expert Bruce Pegg.

A hard act to follow, for sure, but Sun Records boss Sam Phillips comes pretty damn close, albeit occupying an entirely opposite station. This issue we interview renowned biographer Peter Guralnick, who has recently released an excellent book about the great man and his seminal work in rock'n'roll. Another fine rockabilly man, Joe Clay, sat down with us to share his thoughts on his resurgence, and we returned to RCA's famous Studio B in Nashville where we caught up with Kentucky star Bobby Harlan for the inside story. We also got up to speed with one of Sonny Burgess' original Pacers, Bobby Crafford, and Polecats frontman Boz Boorer too – this issue's 'Legends of Rock'.

Plenty of attention is given to the great singles of the golden era, but we thought it was about time that flip sides were given their time in the sun, and our Top 40 offers up our pick of the bunch. Add the "5" Royales' timeless album, our Pin-Up special (including an exclusive interview with Dita Von Teese), the story of rock'n'roll in Chicago and loads more, and we're pretty sure you'll find plenty to enjoy.

A belated happy new year to you all. Let's hope 2016 is a rockin' year!

















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## ALL Vanas CHILDREN



## SOUND & VISION

Celebrating Fretsch, the olls-Royce of

guitars", in style

hey've been the six-strings favoured by rock'n'rollers from Eddie Cochran to Brian Setzer, and now the Country

Music Hall Of Fame and Museum pays tribute to Gretsch with an exhibition, American Sound And Beauty: Guitars From The Bachman-Gretsch Collection, celebrating the history of the 'Rolls-Royce of guitars'. The 75 guitars on

The 75 guitars on show are taken from a collection once owned by Randy Bachman of The Guess Who and Bachman-Turner Overdrive, who had over 300 rare examples. The guitars were bought in 2008 by the Gretsch Foundation, the charitable arm of the Gretsch family. "This collection

> tells a story of American life," says museum CEO Kyle Young. "From the Great Depression to the social unrest of the 1960s and 1970s, music has always evolved to reflect the important issues of the day, providing

a soundtrack to history. These guitars reflect that evolution and tell our story." The exhibition runs until July this year. See www. countrymusichalloffame.org.



#### A DATE WITH DITA

wo upcoming events in the world of burlesque include 'Dita's Crazy Show' at the infamous Crazy Horse nightclub in Paris (March 15-30) and the London Burlesque Festival (May 6-22). The Dita of 'Dita's Crazy Show' is of course none other than internationallyacclaimed glamour puss Dita Von Teese, who returns to the French capital for a run of 33 racy shows to toast the Parisian cabaret's 65th birthday. "My enduring love affair with the historic Crazy Horse Paris has inspired me to return to its iconic stage," says Von Teese. "In addition to performing new acts of my own, I'm also pleased to present a curated selection of my favourite classic Crazy Horse acts to create my ultimate 'Crazy Show'!" (www.lecrazyhorseparis. com). The 10th annual London Burlesque Festival arrives at various London venues in the summer too with its usual broad array of burlesque attractions - see www.



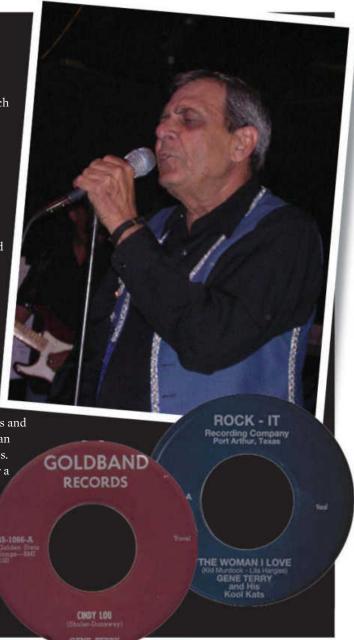
## GENE THERAPY

Tales From The Woods has announced something particularly special for the rock'n'roll calendar in 2016 – a one-off appearance from Gene Terry on June 5th at London's Borderline. One of Gene Terry's inspirations was Elvis, and Gene was there at the Shreveport Municipal Auditorium aged 13 or 14 when the pink-suited Western Bop Cat played the Louisiana Hayride in 1954. Obtaining a Silvertone guitar, Gene quickly

put a band together, and such was his following that at a drive-in movie gig, the big screen announced him as "Port Arthur's own Elvis Presley". Listening to the Big Bopper show Gene extended his band, adding horns, and included R&B material by Smiley Elvis and Fats Domino. Gene's band was reckoned to be the best in South Louisiana, and many a musician

joined - or wanted to. Record collectors will have Gene's version of Cindy Lou, which was actually a flipside, and Gene will include his rare record titles, flipsides and other Southern Louisianan favourites and obscurities. Gene 'retired' in 1960 for a career in the petrochem industry and only plays at special events on occasion - so make sure to get down to this one. Keep your

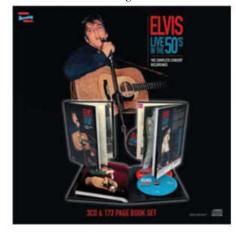
eyes on **www.tftw. org.uk** to find out all the details soon.



## SHOW BUSINESS

emphis Recording Service has raided the archives and amassed - for the first time ever - all of Elvis Presley's 1950s concert recordings into one exclusive 3-disc box set, Elvis Live In The '50s: The Complete Concert Recordings. These priceless recordings include tracks from performances at the Louisiana Hayride, Eagles Hall in Houston Texas, Las Vegas, Canada, Tupelo, and plenty more. All 82 tracks have been lovingly restored and remastered, and there are rare interviews and recently-discovered new material to get your ears around - fan gold! A stunning 172-page book accompanies the music and includes an impressive haul of photographs - a fair few unseen - that add to a chronological 'photo journey'

that begins at Elvis' first show through to his last '50s performance – there's updated linear notes on every show too. **www.memphisrecordingservice.com** has the full tracklisting.



## Objects of desire BOLO TIES

Two charming new bolo ties and pendants from Vivien of Holloway to add some Southern style to your ensemble – one with a horse's head, the other a western hat – and both with attractive horseshoe surrounds. The pendants are 3.5cm wide, and the bolo ties are available in black and white. £14; www.vivienofholloway.com





## **HOW RANDOM!**

As synonymous with rock'n'roll as booze, sex and drugs, gambling is a subject covered by plenty of musicians through the decades. After all, smoky late night clubs, backstage rooms and long journeys via tour bus are ideal breeding grounds for the odd flutter or two and, if the songs are anything to go by, plenty musos have fallen victim to the devilish charms of the odd wager or two... and lost a pretty penny in the process. Here, we reveal our winning hand – a rounded selection of tracks that cover blues and country & western through to rock'n'roll and rockabilly.



### 1 LOUISIANA GAMBLER JIM OERTLING

We begin with a very rare slice of wax indeed. This classic C&W rockabilly platter was released through the La Louisianne label in the '60s. Oertling returned to the scene in 2013 with LP Mossback Revisited.



### **2 GAMBLIN' MAN**MARVIN RAINWATER

Rainwater's *Gamblin' Man* (MGM, 1958) is a highly-charged version of a tune from the American folk songbook, first collected in 1909. Other covers include a harmonious take by The Everly Brothers.



### **3** YOU'RE MY BEST POKER HAND T-RONE WALKER

Venerable bluesman T-Bone Walker gets the last laugh in this classic blues... "The kid spread his hand and then began to blush /But his face turned pale when he saw my queen high flush". Fantastic stuff.



### 4 STAGGER LEE LLOYD PRICE

The first version of this tale of gambling gone bad was withdrawn after complaints from radio listeners and rush-replaced by a new, cleaner take. It is based on the trad blues Ballad of Stack-o-Lee.

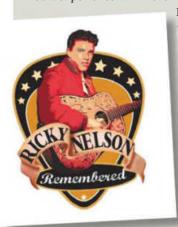


## 51'M A GAMBLIN' WOMAN MEMPHIS MINNIE

Hoodoo singer-songwriter and 'Queen of the Country Blues' Memphis Minnie held her own in a genre dominated by men. Not only was she a superb guitarist, but she also penned many of her own tunes.

## **FULL NELSON**

ecember 2015 marked the 30th anniversary of Ricky Nelson's tragic death in a plane crash on New Year's Eve, 1985. Last issue we celebrated the life and career of the ultimate teen idol, and in this issue we deliver news of new show 'Ricky Nelson Remembered' – a chance to hear Ricky's greatest hits (including *Hello Mary Lou, Travelin' Man* and *Garden Party*) as played by his identical twin sons Matthew and Gunnard. This spectacular new show is more than just music as the Nelson twins immerse their audience in a multimedia experience with never-before-seen big screen footage of the



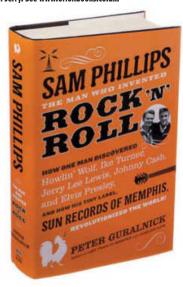
Nelson family, as well as interviews with celebrities influenced by Ricky. The brothers scored a #1 Billboard hit – (Can't Live Without Your) Love & Affection – in their band Nelson, making the Nelsons the only family in the world with three generations of #1 hitmakers. With 6.5 million album sales, the twins are without doubt the best people to continue their father's legacy. Head over to www. matthewandgunnarnelson.com for tour dates and a promo video.



## **★ Sam Phillips: The Man Who**Invented Rock'n'Roll

PETER GURALNICK (ORION/W&N)

Plenty have had the title of 'inventor of rock'n'roll' bestowed upon them. Of course, it's a somewhat meaningless statement in any context, but Phillips deserves more credit than most, for he was the Sun Records visionary who helped set many of the greats – BB King, Elvis, Jerry Lee, Johnny Cash – on a path to glory. Guralnick wrote the excellent two-volume Elvis biography Last Train To Memphis and Careless Love, and in this new tome he explores the life of Sam Phillips with equal expertise. The book tracks Sam's days from his childhood in rural Alabama through to Sun and his career as the world-famous talent spotter, producer and label boss who discovered and recorded a series of world-beating artists. Essential reading. Turn to page 30 for our exclusive interview with the author and Sam Phillips' son Jerry. See www.orionbooks.co.uk.



#### Storm's A-Coming

Burlesque icon Tempest Storm – now 87 – returns to the limelight with a cameo in the new, rather racy video that accompanies Roy Orbison's track Only The Lonely Ones, from the recently-released album of the same name that sat in the vaults for 46 years. Husband and wife team Michael and Alana Lawrence directed the video, which was shot at the Little Darlings club in Las Vegas. Storm. born Annie Banks. was a hit in the '50s and '60s at the Californian burlesque theatre El Rey, in Las Vegas and later at Portland's Star Theater, as well as being romantically linked to Elvis. Aside from many magazine shoots, she lit up the screen in movies such as French Peep Show, Paris After Midnight and documentary Teaserama. In 1987 she also shared her memoirs with Bill Boyd for the book The Lady Is A Vamp. Storm enjoyed one of the longest-running careers of her chosen occupation – over 60 years – and was inducted into the Exotic World Burlesque Museum Hall Of Fame. She's the subject of a feature-length documentary currently in the making.



## BURIED TREASURE

ooting around those boxes of junk in your attic may turn up more than you hoped for. While many vinyl releases from the '50s were widespread and hence of relatively low value – nostalgic value aside, of course – some could land you a small fortune, should you choose to part with them. Here, we take four rare artefacts to the experts at Omega Auctions and ask them for a valuation. Browse their store at www.omegaauctions.co.uk



#### **JOE CLAY** DUCK TAIL/SIXTEEN CHICKS

This infamous 1956 release on Vic Records is a real keeper for any boppin' rockabilly collector! This side also features the considerable talents of Hal Harris on lead guitar (turn to page 38 for our interview with Joe).

VALUE: £150



#### CHUCK BERRY ROCKIN' AT THE HOPS

This was the fourth LP Chuck released with Chess (LP1448) and showcases his songwriting talent in classic cuts such as *Bye Bye Johnny, Let It Rock* and an emotional rendition of Big Maceo's composition *Worried Life Blues*.

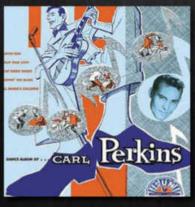
VALUE: £200+ (IF MINT)



#### FRANK FROST WITH THE NIGHTHAWKS HEY BOSS MAN!

Sam Phillips put this record out on his own (short-lived) label Phillips International in 1962. This is a whole album comprising a dozen rockin' R&B shakers! Original copies are now extremely valuable.

VALUE: £600+



#### **CARL PERKINS**

DANCE ALBUM OF... CARL PERKINS

Sam Phillips once told Carl Perkins, "We're one big, inspired mistake". You would hardly notice such 'mistakes' on Perkins' first release on Sun with crackers such as *Blue Suede Shoes* (the original), *Movie Magg* and *Matchbox*.

**VALUE:** £ 500+

## Legends Of Rock Bobby Crafford

Still backing Sonny Burgess and now celebrating 60 years in the music business, Bobby has toured with Jerry Lee Lewis and Roy Orbison, recorded at Sun, and witnessed the thrills and spills of the original rock'n'roll era. **Bill Dahl** says hello...



rom the time I started in '57," says Bobby Crafford, "I've never played with any other band except The Pacers." That kind of longevity would make any rockabilly proud. The 80-year-old drummer keeps things hopping behind Sun legend Sonny Burgess in The Pacers and handles the band's booking, too. Also in the Pacers are pianist Kern Kennedy, who was on Burgess' first seminal 1956 session that spawned Red Headed Woman and We Wanna Boogie, bassist Fred Douglas (the guitarist on Teddy Redell's classic Judy), and saxist Jim Aldridge. Crafford formed his own Razorback label in 1962, its name paying tribute to the sports teams of the University of Arkansas (The Pacers and

#### Are The Pacers busy these days?

Sonny were on Razorback's roster).

We're working about every week. For old guys, we're pretty lucky. We're doing some European stuff, and a lot of local festivals in Arkansas and surrounding states. It keeps us goin'. Our doctors say if we quit, we probably wouldn't last long!

#### You're playing Hemsby this May...

The fans there are great. It's unreal. You tell people here about it, and they don't realise how appreciative of the music the people are over there.

#### How did you get interested in music?

Growing up in a small town, listening to radio. A lot of guys grew up listening to the Grand Ole Opry, but I grew up listening to Nashville and rhythm and blues late at night in Memphis – more the rhythm and blues end of it. I was interested in drums from the time I was 13-14. My high school didn't have a band, but I bought a drum from a guy that had played in a band and took a few lessons.

Then, years later, I'm standing at a drivein with a bunch, and they said, 'We're putting together a band. We can't find a drummer.' I said, 'Hell, I'm a drummer! I can play!' Well, I couldn't play a lick. They said, 'Have you got any drums?' I said no, but I went and bought an old set of drums for \$15 at a high school, and started trying to play. I got the guy that I bought 'em from to show me the right beat, and I went from there. I started playing with this little old band, and then two or three years later, in '57, I hear that Sonny Burgess' drummer had left and went with Conway Twitty. I called 'em, and got the job.

#### What made Sonny one of the most exciting acts of the rockabilly era?

All the guys moved. Of course, I couldn't, and Kern never could on the piano, but the rest of the guys were jumping all over the place. When we were travelling with Johnny Cash, they would go out in the audience playing. The bass player, Johnny Ray Hubbard, had an upright bass, and Sonny would take that long 100-foot guitar cord and go out in the crowd. That really stirred the people up. Those Johnny Cash shows were full every night, and it was just a great feeling. One of the first nights I played with him, we had 50,000 people. I'd never seen 50,000 people all in one place. It was amazing to play for that type of crowd, but he drew that type of crowd everywhere he went.

#### What was recording at Sun like?

They didn't have drums in the studio like they do now. You had to bring your own. I always used mine. You'd have to scoot boxes of stuff over to get the instruments in there, to make room.

Roy Orbison was going on a tour with us. We had a Cadillac limousine that we travelled in, and Roy was going to ride with us. So we were going to meet at Sun. We were doing a session there, and we started out on this song called *Find My Baby For Me*. And Sam said, 'The song needs something. It needs a background singer on it.' And Roy said, 'Hey, I'll sing background on it!' So he did.

## You were on a lot of Sonny's Sun classics – Truckin' Down The Avenue, Tomorrow Night, Little Town Baby – but Sam didn't release them...

He didn't have any money, he could only put out so much stuff. That's why he got into it with so many people. I know Bill Riley always had a bad, hard feeling for Sam – he felt like Sam went with Jerry Lee. Well, Sam could only promote one person at a time. That's the way he was.

#### What made you launch your own Razorback label in 1962?

When Sonny went with Conway [Twitty], we weren't doing any recording, and we figured, 'Hey, we need something to get us work!' So we went to a radio station –we all lived in Newport, Arkansas – and we recorded. We said, 'Alright, we can get this pressed in Memphis, but we need a label.' So we decided, 'Hey, let's just start our own label,' because we couldn't get anybody interested at the time.

#### Didn't you front the first release on Razorback, *Odessa*, as Rapid Robert?

I got that name from high school, playing high school football. Sure did. People still holler at me, calling me that name.

#### How's the new year shaping up for Sonny and the Pacers?

As long as the people enjoy what we do, it really is a great feeling to see the people and make them happy. We don't know how much longer we've got, but we're going to keep going! \*



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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### **Darrel Higham**

Featuring Darrel Higham & the Enforcers plus support, DJs Venue Fujiyama Mama's Hot Rockin' Club, Cherry Red **Records Stadium, Kingston upon Thames** Admission £10 (adv.)/£12 (door) Booking kingsmeadowlive.com

#### **Jukebox Memories**

#### 1 APRIL ONWARDS

Featuring Vince Eager, Brian 'Licorice' Locking and Chas Hodges

Venue Townsend Hall. Shipston-on-Stour Admission £20 Booking Townsend Hall 07514 704057; Oxboffice 0845 6801926

#### Fuiivama Mama's **Hot Rockin' Club**

Featuring The Excellos plus support and DJs Venue Cherry Red Records Stadium, Kingston upon Thames Admission £8 (adv.)/£10 (door) Booking kingsmeadowlive.com



#### Hemsby Rock'n'Roll Weekender

Featuring Sonny Burgess, Jerry Lee 'Smoochy' Smith, WS 'Fluke' Holland. Kid Kyle and more Venue Seacroft Holiday Village Admission See website Booking hemsbyrocknroll.co.uk

#### **Nashville Boogie**

Featuring Wanda Jackson, Slim Jim Phantom, Reverend Horton Heat, Deke Dickerson, James Intveld, Big Sandy, The Planet Rockers, Marcel Bontempi

> Venue Gaylord Oprvland Resort and Nashville Palace Admission See website

Booking nashvilleboogie.com

#### **Ricky Nelson** Remembered

22 MAY - 28 NOVEMBER

Featuring Matthew and Gunnar Nelson playing Ricky Nelson's hits Venue Various Admission See website Booking matthewandgunnarnelson.com

#### **Viva Las Vegas**

14-17 APRIL

Featuring Brian Setzer. Dick Dale. Jack Scott. Lew Williams, Sleepy LaBeef, Rocky Burnette & Darrel Higham, Big Sandy, The Polecats, The Jets, Don Woody, Bobby Hendricks and more plus car show, pool party, burlesque and the rest! Venue The Orleans Hotel & Casino

Admission See website Booking vivalasvegas.net

#### **Wildest Cats In Town**

Featuring Marty Wilde, Hayden Thompson, Gene Summers. Art Adams. Tim Gibson. Crazy Cavan. Matchbox. Lou Cifer, Jet Black, Spunyboys, Lennerockers and more Venue Pontins Pakefield, Lowestoft Admission See website Booking tennesseeclub.net



#### **Box Of Memories**

has Hodges of Chas & Dave, the former Shadows bass player Brian Licorice' Locking and Vintage Rock's Vince Eager take to the road with their new show 'Jukebox Memories' at the Townsend Hall, Shipston-on-Stour on April 1st. They'll be celebrating the birth of British rock'n'roll via Lonnie Donegan and skiffle's greatest tracks through to a tribute to The Shadows and the rockin' shows and hits the boys were involved in. Backed by the fantastic Memphis Tones, the rockin' threesome will be adding more dates to their diaries as they take their show on the road nationwide. Tickets are £20 and available from Townsend Hall, Tel: 07514 704057 or Oxboffice on 0845 6801926.



### **Hot Tips**

Two rip-roaring events are coming up soon at Fujiyama Mama's Hot Rockin' Club, the club that hosts consistently brilliant events at the Cherry Red Records Stadium in Kingston. The first involves Darrel Higham & the Enforcers who take over on Sat 5th March (tickets £10/12), a show that's likely to sell out quick, and the equally exceptional Excellos who let loose their vintage beat blues on Sat 2nd April (£8/10). Both nights have support bands and Dis. Their Rockin' Good Vintage Alldayer is well worth a visit too; the next one takes place on Sun 13th March with a market, beauty parlour, tea room, classic cars and bikes and DJs. See

www. kingsmeadowlive.com



AS SEEN ON THE WILDEST CATS IN

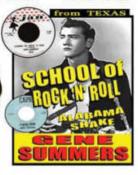
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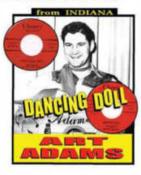
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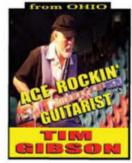






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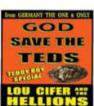
























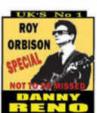


















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## Legends Of Rock Boz Boorer

For over 20 years **Boz Boorer** has been Morrissey's musical director and lead guitarist, but rockabilly fans revere him as a founder member of The Polecats and for his solo work. **Jack Watkins** talks to a great neo-rockabilly pioneer...



hen Martin 'Boz' Boorer formed The Polecats, originally known as Cult Heroes, with Phil Bloomberg, Tim Worman and Chris Hawkes in 1977, the British rock'n'roll revival was just bubbling under. But these lads from North London, mixing punkish influences with a genuine feel for '50s-style hillbilly bop, would eventually become part of an all-toobrief flourish in the mainstream, leading to appearances on Top Of The Pops. Boz's distinctive riffs were a key part of anthemic songs like Rockabilly Guy and Marie Celeste and the classic album Polecats Are Go!. The Polecats still gig and release albums, while Boz has continued on a solo basis, drawing on a stream of influences from swing to rockabilly to Marc Bolan to Ramones-style rock. On these releases, he'll usually slip in a compellingly updated oldie in the midst of primarily self-written material, all of it shot through with the classic touch of a man who really digs the past but isn't shackled by it.

#### Where did you discover rockabilly?

In the house of The Polecats' first drummer Chris Hawkes, around '76 or '77. His brothers were Teds and had some great records. I had the soundtrack from *That'll Be The Day*, and Tim's dad had some Chuck Berry and Eddie Cochran that we loved. Then we discovered punk, and we were never the same again!

#### When did you first pick up a guitar?

I first learned some licks at school when I was 12. We'd sit in the language teacher's room and he would let us play. There were a few budding guitarists in there at the time, including Matthew Ashman, later of Adam and the Ants and Bow Wow Wow. I eventually had an Avon Les Paul

copy. I borrowed the cash from my mum and paid it back from my paper round at £2 a week. It took me 26 weeks!

#### The Polecats' Cult Heroes CD gathers the band's early work, including some demos. Was material like High-Rise Rockabilly and Chicken Shack autobiographical in any way?

Not really. I sang about living in a council flat in *High-Rise Rockabilly*, but I lived in a semi-detached with my mum and dad! But *Chicken Shack* ended up as the B-side for our first single *Rockabilly Guy*, which Phil wrote. He also wrote *Rockin' All Nite*, which had the lyric: "the hippies were there selling drugs and dope to the monks and the nuns and the vicar and the pope".

#### Were there any 1970s rock guitarists you were influenced by or admired?

Marc Bolan was, and is, my first guitar hero. I loved Lyndon Needs of Crazy Cavan and the Rhythm Rockers, and I still do. Albert Lee was a killer, too. Dave Edmunds had a great style, and Alvin Lee was amazing.

#### Dave Edmunds produced your album *Polecats Are Go!* for Mercury...

He was great. I remember him teaching me the run-down on the solo on Elvis's You're Right I'm Left She's Gone and, for some reason, I learned the solo from Movie Magg by Carl Perkins. He also showed me a way of picking a 12-bar bassline and putting In The Mood over the top, which is quite tricky because they have different time signatures.

#### Either solo or with The Polecats, you've backed or supported quite a few veterans like Jerry Lee Lewis, Eddie Bond and Ronnie Dawson...

The only one I properly backed was Ronnie Dawson, who was incredible. We made a few albums together. He had this strange ability to draw amazing playing out of me... it was a joy to work with him. I did a few shows with Huelyn Duvall, which were a lot of fun. I also played sax for Gene Summers in Holland in 1979 and for Billy Lee Riley in Italy a few years back. There's always something to be learnt from classic '50s recording artists.

#### You stayed loyal to rockabilly after The Polecats left Mercury. Which solo album are you most proud of?

I like *Dressed In Dead Men's Suits* by Boz & The Bozmen. It was the first time I had recorded so many different styles. It had the old Polecats favourite *Red Ready Amber*, but also songs by T. Rex, Sam Cooke and Buddy Holly, some old rockabilly songs like *Slippin' In*, and newer material by me and Steve Hooker. I also like my new album, *Age Of Boom* [out on Fabrique Records]. It's diverse again, but all the songs are new.

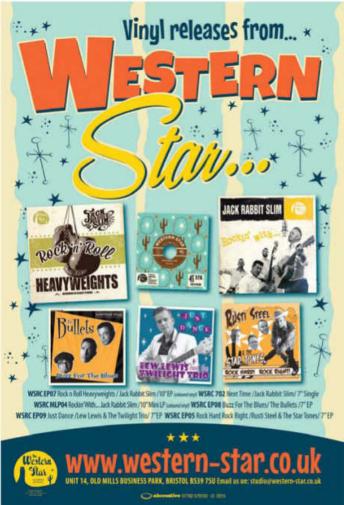
#### Is any new Polecats material due?

We talk a lot about it. The logistics are hard, but I have a studio in Portugal and maybe this year we can all go there for a week and write some new stuff.

## The Polecats really breathed new life into 1950s obscurities. You're a record collector; does your music store reflect your eclectic personal tastes?

My Vinyl Boutique record store is in the basement of Sounds That Swing, 88 Parkway, Camden. Upstairs takes care of the '50s stuff, so I try to stock alternatives such as glam, punk, ska, reggae and some '70s prog. We also have evergreens like The Beatles, Stones and Led Zep and even a healthy Morrissey section. We're next to the Dublin Castle, where we're starting to promote shows – beginning with The Polecats on March 3rd! \*







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# THE Sociality Rockabilly Gentleman AND THE ROCKIN' IN THE USA! \*\* \* ROCKIN' IN THE USA! \*\*

KEEPING THE FUN CLOSE TO HOME, **DOLLIE DEVILLE** AND **ZACK SIMPSON** SEE OUT THE OLD AND USHER IN THE NEW

he end of the year was rounded out by attending the Rockabilly Extravaganza Car Show in Riverside, CA. While the event is already in its ninth year, this was our first time attending. This show was much larger than we imagined! There was a car show, roller derby, vendors, food trucks, and even an airplane show, and of course there were bands, featured on two separate outdoor stages. Stealing the show on the side stage was Minor Strut, a rock'n'roll band comprised of members who are only 10 years old. These kids are young but they already have the stage presence and chops of more experienced acts. The headliner for the night was modern

rockabilly legend Deke Dickerson, with bands such as Los Bandits, Moonlight Trio and The Twilight Drifters in support. One of the highlights of the event was the prestigious pinup contest, named 'The Cavalcade Of Beauty', which we were graciously asked to judge. The competition was strong, but three winning ladies came out on top. The first place winner, Vikki Fahrenheit, stood out for her poise, grace and class, and she will represent the Rockabilly Extravaganza well in her reigning year. This event was a great way to end 2015, and we are so thankful to have been asked to be a part of it. If you'd like more info on next year's show, check out their website at rockabilly66.com.

#### NEW YEAR'S EVE

With so many shows and parties, it's hard to decide where to ring in the new year. This year we ended up at Don The Beachcomber's in Huntington Beach, CA. Don's is the biggest tiki bar around, so it's the perfect place to go for live music, stiff drinks and a little dancing. On this night there was a double billing of Big Sandy and The Flyrite Boys and James Intveld. This event sold out well in advance due to the stellar line-up, multiple stages and buffet dinner. The crowd was dressed to the nines and the tiki mugs seemed to be bottomless. I'm slightly ashamed to admit it, but after three zombies with absinthe I found myself asleep on a couch backstage. Big Sandy found me an hour later and we all had a big laugh over it. I have been back a few times since. I just can't seem to get enough of it!

#### THE RHYTHM COLLISION

January kicked off with a bang this year thanks to Alex 'Axle' Idzardi's The Rhythm Collision. This event, now in its third year, seems to be growing









steadily in attendance and the quality of acts keeps rising as well. It's also the best deal around - a mere \$20 gives you access to three days of music, a car show and vendors. The weekender started on Friday night with the likes of Big Sandy and his Flyrite Boys as well as local legends The Sun Demons. The fun continued on Saturday morning with an outdoor car show. The weather was moderate, but a little light rain provided the perfect time to head indoors for the vintage vendors. There were multiple rooms, with everything from vintage clothing to custom leather and locally made pomades. The day continued with raucous performances by Eddie Clendening, the John Clifton Blues Band, and The Rip 'em Ups. There was also a surprise guest, Dick Dale, but the bands that most seemed to be on everybody's minds were The

Paladins and The Polecats. Neither one disappointed. In what now seems to be a tragic foreshadow of news that would break the very next day, The Polecats lit up the crowd with their fantastic take on the David Bowie song *John, I'm Only* Dancing. The night concluded with a dance contest, judged by your very own Rockabilly Socialite, with Karen Mamont aka The Reverend Martini and Sweetpea of The Hooch and Smooch fame. The night concluded with DJs spinning the night away and keeping the dancefloor packed. We are so excited to see what the future holds for The Rhythm Collision. Be sure to keep up with the news at www. axleshows.com.

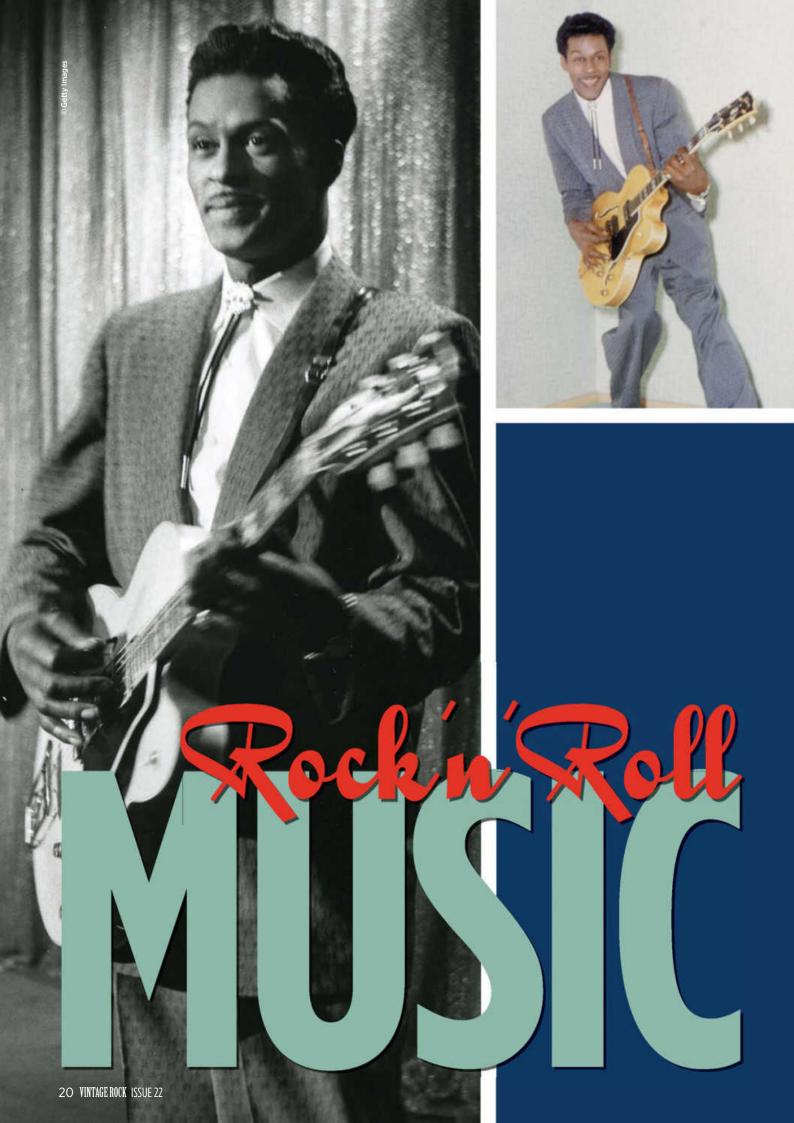
#### THE NAMM SHOW

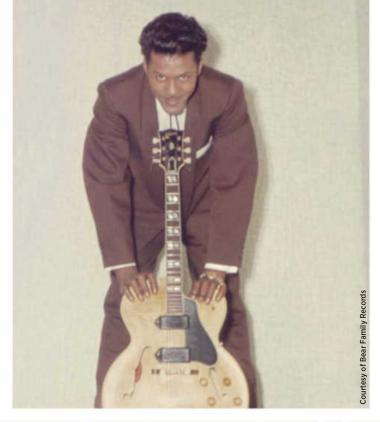
The 2016 NAMM Show in Anaheim, CA proved to be one of the best yet. The weather was great and the event was

Big Sandy at Don The Beachcomber's

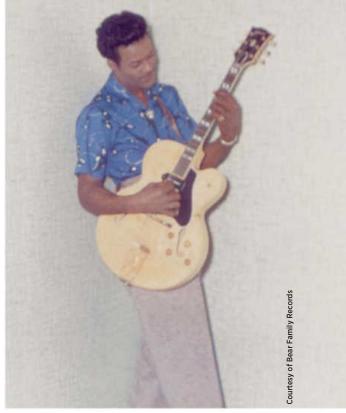
#### well organised, with great attendance.

While there I had the opportunity to visit the Gretsch Guitars room where I was introduced to Product Marketing Specialist Joe Carducci. He proved to be an excellent source of knowledge on all things vintage: music, weekenders and especially guitars! I had the pleasure of talking to him in detail about the Eddie Cochran Signature model 6120. He shared the story about how Gretsch got in contact with the Cochran family and was able to get the original guitar to use as a reference for these reissues. The process of making a faithful recreation is painstaking! We got to talk about how Eddie customised his Chet Atkins Western Model guitar by scratching the gold paint off the pickguard and replacing the Dynasonic neck pickup with a 'dogear' unit. One of the things I found most interesting was that when Eddie's guitar was found in the trunk of the car after that tragic night in England, they also found the tour poster for his double billing with Gene Vincent. Gretsch had these posters reprinted, and include one with every Custom Shop version of the guitar. They also were given original buttons and signed 1959 Christmas cards from Eddie's mother, who ran the fanclub, and these are also included in the Custom Shop issue, which was limited to 60 pieces. As a vintage collector myself, I have to applaud Gretsch for the attention to detail they put into these guitars. If you want to see the original, it resides in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum. Thank you to Gretsch and Joe Carducci for the up close and personal look at the Eddie Cochran Signature model!





Courtesy of Bear Family Records



# WE READ THE PAGES: **CHUCK BERRY** WROTE THE BOOK. IN CELEBRATION OF THE SINGER, COMPOSER, LYRICIST AND GUITARIST'S 90TH BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR, *VINTAGE ROCK* GATHERS SOME LESSER-SEEN IMAGES, WHILE **RANDY FOX** SPEAKS TO BIOGRAPHER BRUCE PEGG AND CHARTS THE LIFE OF ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MEN IN ROCK'N'ROLL...

n November 1958, Chuck Berry found himself backstage at the Ottawa Auditorium Arena. A young girl was grabbing every star she could find and demanding they add their signature to the album she clutched tightly in her white-gloved hands. For most people, her obsessive mania for autograph accumulation was a minor annoyance, or perhaps a source of amusement – but for Berry, she was an inspiration.

Six weeks later, he was at Chess Records in Chicago for a recording session. The first song he cut was *Sweet Little Sixteen*. Remembering the preteen autograph hound, Berry delivered a perfectly-painted portrait of the rock'n'roll mania that was gripping the world. By modifying a few details and combining the incident with his spot-on ability to nail universal themes, he transformed a minor anecdote into a classic tale of the clash between teenage passions and frustrations — and all with an irresistible rockin' beat.

It was rock'n'roll magic of the type that Berry had been working for over three years, and that he continued to capture on his best recordings into the 1960s. As one of the founding fathers of rock'n'roll, he brought his genius as a songwriter, his skill as an innovative guitarist and his talent as a performer, and he continues to influence and inspire other musicians. But along with those superlatives he possessed a sense of independence and individualism that both drove his success and led to personal shame and scandal.

Born on 18 October 1926, Charles Edward Anderson Berry grew up in the black, middle class neighbourhood of St Louis, Missouri known as the Ville. The son of an uneducated, but successful building contractor and a college-trained English teacher, Berry's family saw education and financial independence as a path to greater freedom for African-Americans. Although Berry was capable of doing well in school, he had a rebellious streak that his parents' discipline couldn't tame. In the late summer of 1944, just as Berry was about to start his senior year of high school, he decided to run away to California with two friends. The trio headed west in a 1937 Oldsmobile, but their money only lasted the 250 miles to Kansas City,



Berry's charisma, power-packed performances and overdriven songs brought the house down

where they made the tragic mistake of turning to petty banditry, armed with the broken and inoperable frame of a .22 pistol. What started as teenage mischief ended in three years in a state prison.

When Berry returned home at the age of 21, his days of trouble-making seemed to be behind him. His will and ambition were now focused on the future, even more so after he married and settled down to what seemed to be domestic bliss. A stint in a local cosmetology

college led to what appeared to be a stable career as a beautician, but Berry's inner ambition was expanding further than anyone realised.

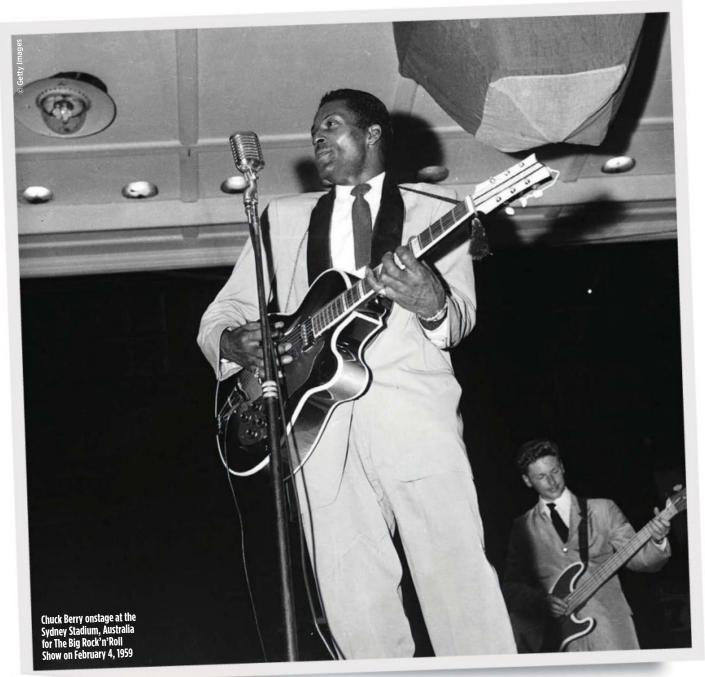
As a teenager, he began playing guitar and performed at school events. His time in prison led to performing with a gospel quartet and a small jump blues combo in the big house. When he returned home, he continued to refine his skills and soon moved from playing house parties to professional gigs with local R&B combos.

By 1954 he had teamed up with pianist Johnnie Johnson, with whom he collaborated for many years. Berry's stage charisma, power-packed performances and overdriven covers of country songs brought the house down in the rough and tumble nightclubs around St Louis. While adding country music to the mix of bop and blues might have seemed like an unusual choice, it was a stroke of genius. Through the mid-1940s, black artists seldom received air play on the radio outside of small stations in major cities like New York and Chicago, but country music was easy to find on the dial with fans on both sides of the colour line.

Berry was soon taking his mix of R&B, pop and hillbilly to another level as he began to fuse elements from all three styles into a new sound. He also began writing lyrics that demonstrated his wit and ability to build simple narratives that sparked instant identification from listeners, and soon he was ready to take his music beyond St Louis and secure a recording contract.

Armed with one of his most popular songs, *Ida Red*, a revved-up hillbilly-flavoured tune concerning fast cars and ▶







a misbehaving woman, Berry headed north to the offices of Chess Records in Chicago. It was perfect timing, according to Bruce Pegg, author of Brown Eyed Handsome Man: The Life And Hard Times Of Chuck Berry and the book that accompanies Bear Family Record's massive, career-spanning box set, Rock & Roll Music — Any Old Way You Choose It. "Leonard and Phil Chess had done very well with blues records, but they knew other types of R&B were starting to crossover to a white audience," Pegg points out. "They wanted something that would catch, and when they heard Chuck Berry, they thought, 'That's it!' It was a very different sound. As Leonard Chess said later, 'The big beat, cars and young love — it was a trend and we jumped all over it."

After a name change from *Ida Red* to *Maybellene*, Berry recorded his first single on 21 May 1955 at Chess' studio. Leonard Chess smelled a hit, pressing 10,000 copies of the single out of the gate, 10 times the number of most Chess releases. Within a few weeks his nose for big sellers was proven correct when the single shot to #1 on the R&B chart and topped out at #5 on the pop chart.

Maybellene was a masterpiece of musical engineering. Chuck took the basic components of R&B, hillbilly and pop that Elvis Presley had combined just a few months earlier, but reconfigured them in an entirely different sequence that equaled the same result – rock'n'roll.

"St. Louis' proximity to Chicago probably had some bearing on the way Chuck fused those different styles," Pegg



### Roll Over Beethoven was a pipe bomb of excitement and a call to arms for every fan of the new big beat sound. How could any redblooded teenager resist its allure?

continues. "He loved Muddy Waters and T-Bone Walker, even though his early stuff doesn't have an overtly bluesy influence. He was also influenced by Jay McShann and was a huge fan of Louis Jordan, so you have that definite jump blues feel. But there's also no denying the country elements that he used and his sense of lyricism. He already had that incredible command of words and imagery. I mean, 'Rainwater blowin' all under my hood, I know that I was doin' my motor good,' is just classic.

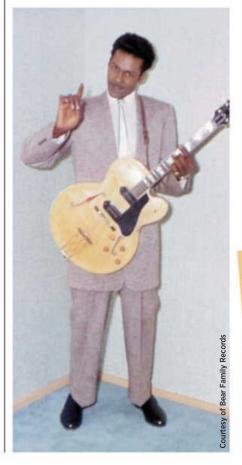
"There are all these clues that Chuck was very well versed in prose and poetry," Pegg adds. "His mother was an English teacher, and Julia Davis, his eighth grade teacher, was a strong supporter of an Afro-centric curriculum. So it's likely that he was exposed to the work of many African-American writers and poets. While I can't say for certain, I believe that he was probably influenced by Langston Hughes. He was a huge figure in the 1940s, and Hughes' work brought an attention to both detail and larger themes that Chuck probably picked up either through deliberate study or osmosis."

Whatever the source, Berry had the ability to convey vivid images with a few perfectly-chosen details and present them in way that inspired instant identification from listeners, which quickly became a hallmark of his style. It's reflected in the narratives, wit and style of the songs that quickly followed on the heels of Maybellene — Thirty Days, You Can't Catch Me, Too Much Monkey Business and Brown Eyed Handsome Man.

Although this incredible string of recordings all measured up artistically and scored big on the R&B charts, none duplicated the crossover success of *Maybellene*. With the incredible breakout success of Elvis Presley in the first months of 1956, it became apparent while rock'n'roll was born in the juke joints and honky tonks, its primary audience was too

young for such establishments. Berry's tales of legal threats in *Thirty Days* or work-a-day frustrations in *Too Much Monkey Business* might bring smiles of recognition from young adults, but they fell short on the teen crowd.

Roll Over Beethoven provided the perfect formula. Released in May 1956, the song opened with a riff recycled from the intro of Louis Jordan's 1946 hit Ain't That Just Like a Woman that Berry supercharged and transformed into a personal signature that inspired the careers of thousands of would-be rock'n'roll guitar heroes. Lyrically, the song was a pipe bomb of excitement and a call to arms for every fan of the new big beat sound; how could any red-blooded teenager resist its allure?



## Listen up

#### **BERRY-ED TREASURES**

Chuck Berry's chart hits are all acknowledged classics, but throughout his career he has recorded a large variety of numbers that never came close to the charts. Here are some lesser-known favourites with their recording dates and where they first appeared. All of these tracks are available on Bear Family Records' comprehensive box set Rock And Roll Music — Any Old Way You Choose It.



#### (The) Down Bound Train

(Chess, B-side of *No Money Down*, 1955)
A combination of the cowboy classic *Riders In The Sky* and the themes from several traditional gospel songs plus a driving rhythm make this song a classic



#### Havana Moon

(Chess, B-side of You Can't Catch Me, 1956) Inspired by the calypso craze of the time, this cool Chuck Berry workout provided Richard Berry (no relation) with the basis for the song Louie. Louie



#### La Juanda

(Chess, B-side of *Oh Baby Doll*, 1957) A smooth pop ballad based on Latin rhythms which also displays the influence of Nat King Cole on Berry's music



#### 13 Question Method

(From Chess LP *Chess Masters*, 1957) A lost Chuck Berry classic until it was finally released in 1981



#### **County Line**

(From Chess LP Chuck Berry's Golden Decade Vol. 3. 1959)

One of several great tracks from 1959 sessions that feature Harvey Fuqua of The Moonglows and Etta James on backing vocals



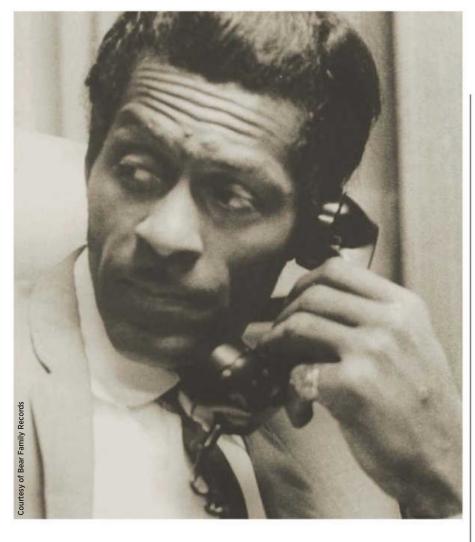
#### Go Go Go

(Chess, AA-side with *Come On*, 1961)
The third chapter of the *Johnny B Goode* story is a classic that was ignored due to the scandal surrounding Berry's legal troubles









## School Day contrasted the drudgery of education with the exhibaration and freedom found on the new frontier of rock n'roll

The song roared up the R&B chart in the summer of 1956 to the #2 spot and crossed over to pop, rising to #29. Although its climb didn't equal the heights of *Maybellene*, there was no doubt that Berry had found the main vein to mine for chart success.

"Chuck was a very astute observer of the people coming to see him play," Pegg says. "I think he was very aware of what was going on in the teenage mind at that time. Too Much Monkey Business and No Money Down were a bit too clever for kids, but when he hit Roll Over Beethoven he started to become aware that if he could make references to a teenage audience, then he would sell records."

In January 1957, Berry was back in the Chess studio armed with a nuclear-

powered teenage-seeking missile. *School Day (Ring! Ring! Goes the Bell)* focused Berry's slice-of-life wit squarely on his teen audience, contrasting the drudgery and oppression of education with the exhilaration and freedom to be found on the new frontier of rock'n'roll.

"The key line is, 'Deliver me from the days of old," Pegg says. "That's the big thing that runs through those lyrics.

This is a whole new generation that is done with Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and everything that meant something to the older generation. 'We have our own music now and our own place in the world,' and Chuck tapped right into that feeling. People often insult artists for being commercial. Chuck was very commercial and very calculated about the way he

did it, but he was also able to tap into something more universal. He was talking directly to teenagers at that time, but he was also tapping into experiences that we've all had and that teenagers continue to have."

For the next year, Berry continued to target the teen market and the crossover hits followed — *Oh Baby Doll, Rock And Roll Music*, and the real life inspired *Sweet Little Sixteen*. But as 1958 dawned, Berry seemed determined beyond the confines of the teen scene, as he delivered a song that would become his signature song and one of the all-time great rock'n'roll standards.

Johnny B Goode was the tale of a 'country boy' and his rise to rock'n'roll stardom. While there's certainly a heaping portion of autobiography in the lyrics, Berry's sense of universality once again trumped other concerns. Rather than the personal story of one rock'n'roll star, Berry served up a tale that every would-be rock'n'roll star could fit themselves into, cementing the emotional bond by taking Johnny to the verge of stardom, and then ending the song with a 'you know the rest' wink-and-a-nod.

Released in March 1958, Johnny B Goode spent 15 weeks on the Billboard charts, reaching #2 R&B and #8 pop. It also heralded a new era for Berry's songwriting as he refocused the subject of his songwriting. While Berry had never completely abandoned the adult concerns of his early material or his willingness to push the boundaries of his music, most of those excursions had been relegated to B-sides or album cuts. Through 1958 and into 1959, Berry became braver in the material he recorded for the singles market with songs like Carol, Almost Grown and the masterful Memphis, Tennessee, and his aging fan base eagerly followed him.

"I think Chuck got to the point he felt free as an artist," Pegg says. "He knew people would buy his records, so he could take some chances. He didn't have to go with the formula. *Memphis, Tennessee* is such a great example, with that proto-reggae rhythm. It's just his vocals and guitar with the drums in the background. It's the mark of an artist who was willing to take some chances. You can almost hear him saying, "This might not sell, but let's give it a shot.' As

#### TALKIN' 'BOUT CHUCK BERRY

"To me, he always was the epitome of rhythm and blues and rock and roll playing. It was beautiful, effortless, and his timing was perfection. He is rhythm supreme. He plays that lovely double-string stuff, which I'm still getting the hang of. Later I realised why — the size of the guy. He makes those big Gibsons look like a ukulele!" — Keith Richards

"Of all the early breakthrough rock and roll artists, none is more important to the development of the music than Chuck Berry. He is its greatest songwriter, one of its greatest guitarists, and one of its greatest performers" — Cub Koda

"While Elvis was a country boy who sang 'black' to some degree... Chuck Berry provided the mirror image where country music was filtered through an R&B sensibility" — Clive Anderson

"If you tried to give rock and roll another name, you might call it 'Chuck Berry'" — John Lennon

"Berry's *On Top* is probably my favourite record; it defines rock and roll. To get that feel is really hard. It's the push-pull of it" — Joe Perry, Aerosmith

"I never liked blues, and I really didn't like jazz. I liked Chuck Berry" — Johnny Ramone

"(My mama) said, 'You and Elvis are pretty good, but you're no Chuck Berry'" — Jerry Lee Lewis

his career progressed, he started to do that more. Toward the end of the 1950s he was trying all sorts of things that he probably wouldn't have done just a few years earlier."

The career highs proved to be short-lived. In December 1959, he was arrested and charged with violation of the Mann Act, an antiquated Federal law originally enacted to combat interstate prostitution but frequently used to prosecute interracial and extra-marital relationships. The charges stemmed from allegations that he had sexual intercourse with a 14-year-old Apache prostitute, Janice Escalante, whom he had transported over state lines to work as a hat check girl at his club.

News of the arrest had an immediate, negative effect on Berry's record sales and live bookings. In a clearly racially prejudiced trial in March 1960, Berry was convicted, fined \$5,000, and sentenced to five years in prison. An appeal of the verdict was filed and Berry tried to return to normal life, but found little work and even fewer record sales. Despite this, the material Berry recorded in 1960 remained first class, including a superb sequel to *Johnny B Goode* that would prove prophetic in its title, *Johnny Bye Bye*.



## "Even though his performances could be erratic, there were times when they were absolutely brilliant"

Berry's appeal led to his conviction being overturned and a second trial was held in May and June 1961. The verdict was the same, but this time Berry received a three-year sentence. Although Berry had clearly shown poor judgement and possibly violated the law, there was also little doubt that his trial and punishment might have followed a dramatically different course had he been white. It was an echo of his first, teenage brush with the law — Berry was an intelligent, capable man given to poor personal choices at times, but because of his race, the punishment that followed was often harshly out of proportion.

On 19 February 1962, Berry entered the Federal Prison in Terre Haute, Indiana to begin serving his sentence. With his strong belief in self-improvement, he spent his prison sentence earning his high school diploma as well as taking courses in business management, law and accounting. He also took his time away from the spotlight to write a number of songs to record upon his release. When he was released on 18 October 1963, after serving 18 months of sentence, he was eager and ready to return to his music, but many people noticed the changes in his personality.

"People say that he came out of jail bitter," Pegg says. "I'm not sure that is necessarily true. I think it was a progression and that was just one more indignity that created a wall around him that is so hard for people to penetrate. People also say that's when he started to learn the music business, but that's only partly true. He was already going down his own road. He took charge of his own publishing in 1958 when he started Chuck Berry Music, so he was clearly a businessman already. He just used the time in jail to come out stronger and more independent than he was before."

Back from prison and ready to return to music, Berry made a spectacular comeback in 1964. He placed five singles on the charts, including some of the finest recordings of his career – *Nadine* (Is That You?), No Particular Place To Go, and Promised Land. In a year dominated by The Beatles and their fellow British invaders, Berry proved that at least one original rock'n'roller still had the goods, and his musical acolytes from across the pond paid back their debt as covers of Chuck Berry songs by The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Animals and many other beat groups delivered a mountain of publishing royalties to Berry's accounts.



Back in the UK, sales of Berry's records soared as the result of a new distribution deal Chess negotiated with Pye Records, and Berry reinforced those sales with a highly successful UK tour in May 1964. It was an amazing year by any standards, but as the 1960s progressed and the pop music scene experienced dramatic changes, Berry's fortunes declined.

"He came out of jail and did several great singles," Pegg says, "but eventually, he began to rehash his old material.

Throughout the '60s you see him returning to a lot of what he had done before. He just didn't seem to care anymore. But even if he was spent as a songwriter and recording artist, he was still out there playing his heart out for ungodly numbers of nights every year, and did that for decades.

"Even though his live performances could be erratic, there were times when they were absolutely brilliant. People forget that he was still a viable musician even if he wasn't recording the next *Johnny B Goode.*"

In 1972, he scored his last two US hits with live recordings of the novelty song

My Ding-A-Ling (his only #1 pop hit) and Reelin' & Rockin'. Even if Berry's days as a hit-maker were over, his relentless touring for the next four decades kept him in front of audiences and in the public eye. He built a reputation as a strictly 'my way or the highway' artist, and had further scrapes with the law and legal problems, even while his legacy grew in stature. After over 200 monthly appearances at the Blueberry Hill nightclub in St Louis, he played his last show in October 2014, and retired from the public eye, even though offers to play one more show continue to arrive from around the globe.

When it comes to the founding fathers of rock'n'roll, Chuck Berry was the complete package. As a songwriter, musician, performer, businessman and innovator, he delivered the goods in a way few artists have equalled. In the end, no matter what terms are applied to him — brilliant or imprudent, ambitious or mercenary, pragmatic or hardheaded — Chuck Berry has always been dedicated to being Chuck Berry, and the rest of the world just had to catch up. \*



## Listen up

BERRY-ED TREASURES continued...



#### **Liverpool Drive**

(From Chess LP *St Louis To Liverpool*, 1964) A hot instrumental tune from his 1964 comeback album, titled to appeal to the new generation of Beatles fans



#### Back To Memphis

(Mercury A-side, 1967)
Although Berry's Mercury Recordings are a mixed bag, they do contain some gems like this recording from Hi Records in Memphis



#### Tulane

(Chess A-side, 1969) Berry's first single after returning to Chess failed to chart but showed the master was still in fine form



#### **London Berry Blues**

(From Chess LP *The London Chuck Berry Sessions*, 1972)
A hot instrumental cut at Pye Studios in London with Derek Griffiths, Ric Grech, Kenny Jones and lan McLagan backing Berry



#### Woodpecker

(From the Chess LP *Bio*, 1973) Another great instrumental from the master's later Chess period



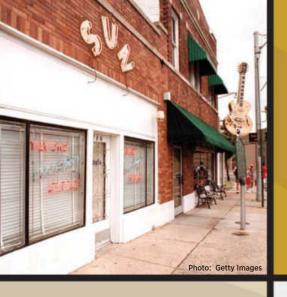
#### Oh What A Thrill

(Atco single A-side, 1979)
A great rocker from Berry's last full studio session, covered by Rockpile a year later for their Seconds of Pleasure LP



Rock'n'Roll Music — Any Old Way You Choose It must be the dream collection for any Chuck fan. This 2014 Bear Family release contains a 104-page photo book and a 252-page book with an essay by Bruce Pegg, plus every conceivable track — 396 of them — spread over 16 CDs. Some very lucky buyers also nabbed the special 'Guitar Edition'...





## PETER GURALNICK HAS DELIVERED A REMARKABLE BOOK ON THE STORY OF **SAM PHILLIPS** THAT SHINES NEW LIGHT ON HIS METHODS AND CONVICTIONS. **RANDY FOX** TALKS TO THE AUTHOR...

"If Sam had quit before July 5 1954 when Elvis cut That's All Right, he still would have left an almost unparalleled legacy with just the blues, R&B and other music"

n his new book, author Peter Guralnick paints a fascinating portrait of Sun Records founder Sam Phillips (2003-2013) as an entrepreneur, record producer, musical visionary, and true American original. Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock'n'Roll is both a followup and an expansion of Guralnick's 2000 documentary of the same title. The book builds on years of research and interviews with Phillips and the people close to him, and Guralnick brings the same level of thoroughness and lyrical voice that he brought to his other definitive works. His best-known books include biographies of Elvis Presley (1994's Last Train To Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley and 1999's Careless Love: The Unmaking Of Elvis Presley) and Sam Cooke (2006's Dream Boogie:

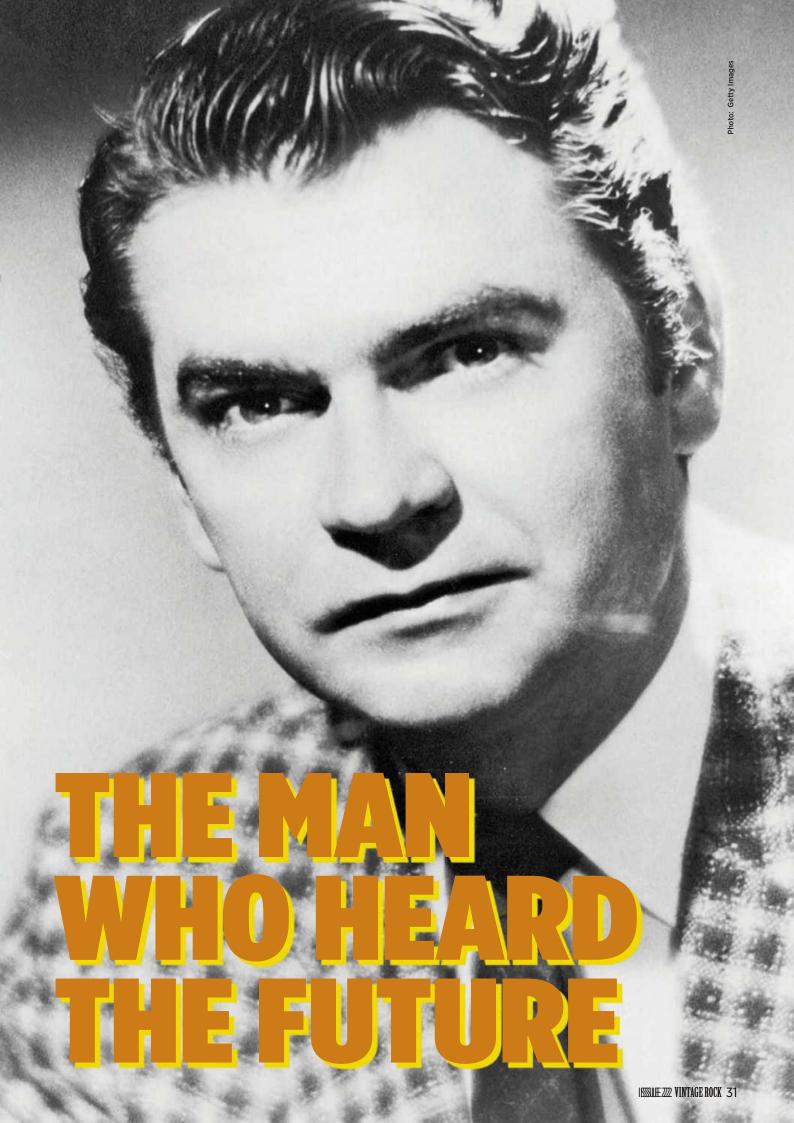
The Triumph Of Sam Cooke), but he's also thrown his net wider with such works as 1971's Feel Like Going Home: Portraits In Blues, Country, And Rock'n'Roll, 1977's Lost Highway: Journeys & Arrivals Of American Musicians and 1986's Sweet Soul Music: Rhythm And Blues And The Southern Dream Of Freedom. This issue, Vintage Rock speaks with Guralnick in Nashville about Sam Phillips' life and legacy...

Your book doesn't contain many surprises about the history of Sun Records and Sam Phillips, but it is revelatory in the way you have presented a thorough picture of Sam's personality, beliefs and motivations, and how that led to such incredible music. Was your main goal to deliver this full portrait of Sam Phillips as such a unique individual?

That's what I've wanted to do with everyone that I've written about. I'm not saying that I've always achieved it, but that was my goal. I wanted it to be a big, discursive, plum pudding of a book with comedy, tragedy, and lyrical passages – just like Sam Phillips was as a person.

I wanted the book to have all these different styles that reflected Sam as a person. Although there is linearity in the history of Sam's life, it would not be what really held the book together. The historical linearity carries the story until Sam leaves the music business for all intents and purposes around 1960, but I didn't want the last part of the book to be just a historical record of his achievements and the awards he won later in life. What carried it was the same thing that carried the relationship we built as I got to know Sam [starting in 1979]. He was someone who was a total original, who had a vision of bigger democratic dreams and vistas for America. It was a vision of social, racial and economic justice and











## Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock'n'Roll

SUN RECORDS

Curated by Peter Guralnick to accompany his book



#### Sun Records: 60th Anniversary

SUN RECORDS

60 tracks across two CDs that encapsulate the label



#### Sun Rock Box 1950-1959

BEAR FAMIL

Exhaustive 8CD box with 620 mins of music!



#### **Sun Records Collection**

RHINO

Sun's leading lights plus lesser knowns



#### **Sun Country Box 1950-1959**

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Six-disc box set covering Sun's country output



#### **The Sun Records Anthology**

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the music [he recorded] fit within that vision, but the music didn't determine that vision.

## How would you say Sam Phillips was different from other independent 'record men' of the time?

Everything Sam did was out of passionate belief. He thought well of a lot of the independent labels, but Sam had that driving passion. It was a belief in the voice of people who had been denied a voice for class and racial reasons, and that was tied to an aesthetic concept that he was not going to put out a record unless he totally believed in it. There are some exceptions, but the point is he was not going to pad his catalogue. He drove Jim Bulliet crazy in their short partnership [during the early days of Sun Records] because Bulliet wanted him to release more product, but Sam would not do it. In fact, in Sam's earliest correspondence with Leonard Chess [when Sam was still recording masters for Chess Records] he said they needed to create something great in every session. It was not enough to be ordinary. He also said they had to reward the people that recorded for them - to give them a sense of self-worth, make them feel like they had an investment in the recording, and because it was right.

Just look at what he accomplished in the first four years of his studio. If he had quit before July 5, 1954 when Elvis cut *That's All Right*, he still would have left an almost unparalleled legacy with just the blues, R&B and other music. Sam had the conviction that records by Ike Turner, BB King and Howlin' Wolf could cross over in a way that would pulverise the race line.

You quote from a 1951 letter from Sam Phillips to Leonard Chess about the style of hillbilly music Sam wanted to record. Sam describes it as "hillbilly numbers with a good solid BEAT!"



## It sounds like he was describing rockabilly a full three years before Elvis' first record. Was that a surprise?

It was, and it shows that there was something in the air. Sam was recognising a trend on both the R&B side and the hillbilly side that something was happening with a new style of music, but nobody could quite name it.

Probably the most famous quote attributed to Sam is his assertion that he could "make a billion dollars" if he could find a white man with a black sound and feel. It's been used to characterise Sam as a mercenary businessman, but was that the case?

The quote wasn't intended the way most people take it. It wasn't a straight ahead statement that Sam wanted to make a billion dollars. It's not that Sam was against making money. He had to support his family, and he probably would have left the business rather than jeopardise his family's welfare. But Sam always said it with a laugh, as if he was joking, and the source of the quote, Marion Keisker, always explicated it in that way. The main idea was that it was a way for African-American music to gain acceptance.

There were certainly plenty of country artists who drew from the blues or R&B before Elvis, so how did Sam's vision differ from that of country artists who were influenced by R&B?

Sam was well aware of artists like Bob Wills who loved the blues and had a great affinity for it. Or Jimmie Rodgers, who Sam venerated, or the underlying blues feeling of Hank Williams, but this was a different thing. It was a new form that



he was looking for that was completely different from what had been done in the past. That's the reason that Sam didn't have higher regard for Bill Haley. He thought he was talented, but he also thought he was just repeating the same old rhythmic tropes. He saw Haley's music as basically a western swing band that was covering R&B well, but Haley didn't have the striking originality that Sam was looking for. There are people that would argue with that view, but that's what Sam thought.

## So you're saying Sam never changed his goal... he just changed the method of getting there?

Sam finally came to the conclusion that the music was not going to cross over until someone like Elvis could put out music that was no different in its feel, but was more acceptable [to a white audience] because of his colour. In a sense, when Sam started recording white singers like Elvis and Carl Perkins, he simply reversed the method while still shooting for the same goal he wanted to

achieve with black artists. The success of *Blue Suede Shoes* and *Heartbreak Hotel* smashed the colour line. Both sold in enormous numbers to both whites and African-Americans and afterwards, great black artists like Chuck Berry and Little Richard were able to become pop stars. Sam believed once people heard the music, things would never go back to the way they were, and he was right. That was the power of rock'n'roll.

"SAM **BELIEVED** THAT ONCE **PEOPLE** HEARD THE **MUSIC** THINGS WOULD **NEVER** GO BACK THEY **WAY THEY WERE**, AND HE WAS **RIGHT**" Although Sam recorded a few black artists after 1956 – Roscoe Gordon and Frank Frost would be two examples – he primarily focused on white rockabilly and rock'n'roll artists. Why wasn't Sun Records able to discover more black rock'n'rollers?

The success of Elvis' first record inspired all these aspiring white singers

#### "Sam could only really focus on one artist at a time. There was just not enough time in the day when things were really happening"



across the South. The music Elvis was performing was deeply familiar to them on the one hand, but it also woke them up to what the music could be. It changed every one of them and brought many of them to the Sun studio. So it was mainly white artists who were coming to him. Plus, Sun was primarily a one-man operation, and Sam could really only fully focus on one artist at a time. He later faulted himself for not being able to delegate better. There was just not enough time in the day when things were really happening.

Plus, I think the music business really stopped happening for Sam after Jerry Lee's disastrous visit to England in June 1958, and Johnny Cash left the label shortly after that. Sam didn't leave the music business completely until 1960, but the back of his business and his spirit was broken in 1958. That was when he began to invest his energy

in other things like his radio stations and an Arkansas zinc mine that he bought. The mine was not a way to get rich, it was just something that fascinated him, but that shows how he would take up one offcentre interest after another.

He also fell in love with building things. The first thing he built was the Phillips Recording Studio on Madison Avenue in Memphis, and he kept building things all through the 1960s. And when I say he built things, he paid attention to every square inch and was in charge of every detail. If he had remained totally committed to the music business, there's no telling what he would have done. As an outsider you can say "I wish he had discovered the Memphis version of Chuck Berry", but it was like his heart was just no longer in it.

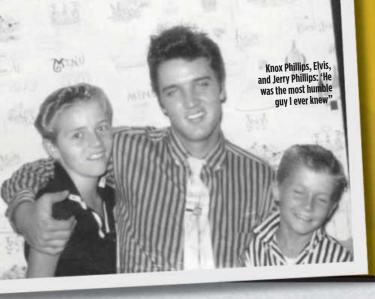
## Aside from his visionary ideas and many accomplishments, what's the most outstanding trait of Sam Phillips as a person?

Everything he did was full on, with total commitment and total passion. When we made the documentary in 2000, he came to it with the same commitment and passion that he brought to his recordings. That's when I realised that the reason it took Knox Phillips and me 10 years to persuade him to do it wasn't that he didn't want to do it. It was that if he was going to do it, he had to set everything else aside. He was an absolute, total original in every way. \*









## 50<u>1</u>05 501

## **JERRY PHILLIPS**, SAM'S YOUNGER SON, WAS THERE WHILE ELVIS PLAYED PIANO IN THE FAMILY LIVING ROOM AND WHEN JERRY LEE SWAM IN THE POOL. *VINTAGE ROCK* SPOKE WITH HIM ABOUT HIS FATHER'S LEGACY...

orn in 1948, Jerry
Phillips grew up
at ground zero of
the rockabilly and
rock'n'roll explosion.
As a teenager, Jerry
gained acclaim as a member of the 1960s
Memphis combo The Jesters, and later
worked as a record producer and song
publisher. He now oversees the Phillips
family businesses of radio stations,
recording studios and song publishing
and is a proud steward of his family's
musical legacy.

#### Growing up, did Sam Phillips seem very different to other fathers?

I noticed at a very young age that he was completely different from all of my friends' parents in every way. Instead of wearing his belt buckle in the front, he would pull it around to the side. He was never interested in shooting for the bullseye that everyone else wanted to hit. He was very non-traditional about anything he did, and the way he raised Knox and me was very free-spirited. He's the most unique individual I've ever met.

#### Working almost exclusively with black artists in Memphis during the early 1950s was a daring move for your father. Did you ever hear comments or taunts about it from classmates?

There was an air of, "Your dad is a little weird for what he's doing with these black artists." I don't remember any racial slurs, but I think a lot of the parents didn't want their kids hanging out with the Phillips boys because of the prejudice.

#### Were you a fan of the music your father was recording?

Knox and I liked the blues guys, but I was a little young to form opinions. We really loved rock'n'roll when it broke. We went to the studio quite a bit, and I can remember when Sam gathered us around and played us an acetate of Elvis' *That's All Right*. He said, "I think I've just made a record that's gonna change our lives."

#### Did Elvis visit the Phillips house?

Elvis and a bunch of his buddies would always come over at midnight. After he hit it big, he couldn't get out until then nights with Elvis have really stuck with me through all the years.

#### Has Peter Guralnick's book taught you anything new about your father?

I learned a lot. I lived a lot of it, but Sam was working 18 hour days or more in the early years. I didn't see a lot of him, but in the book it all comes together – how hard he worked, what he believed. I also think my mother deserves a lot of credit. When Sam came home in 1950 and told her that he wanted to quit his job at the radio station and record black artists, she could have said, "Are you shitting me?" There

## "I think the book is an inspirational tale of what can be done if you believe in your convictions"

because he'd be mobbed. My dad and mother would wake me and Knox, and we'd stay up talking and listening to Elvis play the piano. About five in the morning my mother would fix breakfast, Elvis would leave and we got to miss school. That was a pretty different approach to parenting! I can't remember anything I learned in school, but I can remember Elvis being the biggest star in the world and yet the most humble guy I ever knew. He treated Knox and I like we were his brothers and never had a bad thing to say about anybody. He was the most handsome man I ever saw, and he always had beautiful women with him. Those

was no guaranteed salary in the studio, but she stood by him. She is a jewel.

#### How has the biography affected the way you view your father's legacy?

It's been an inspiration. Sam always said, "For God's sake, boys, don't be a conformist," but you can lose that commitment when things aren't going right. I think this book is an inspirational tale of what can be done if you have determination and really believe in your convictions. Luck or fate had a hand in it, but it would not have happened if he hadn't believed in what he was doing and stuck with it.



### The last word on the first name in Rock'n'Roll



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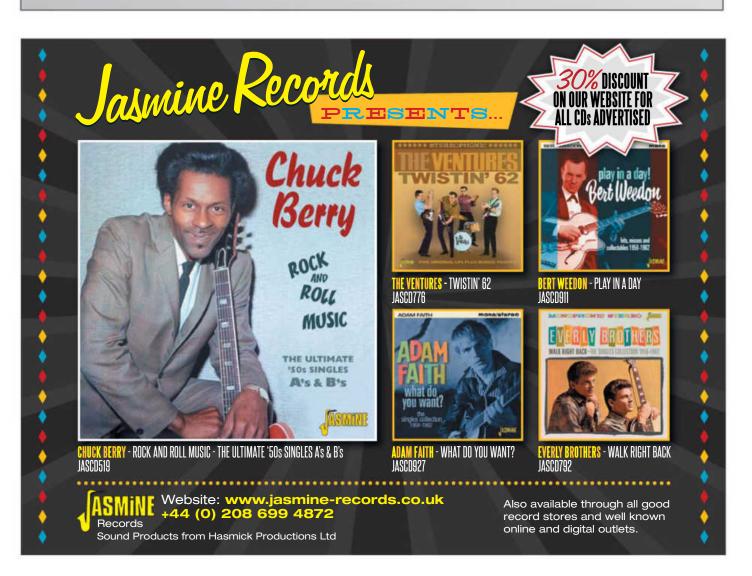
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### MANY HAPPY Actuals

ALWAYS A WELCOME VISITOR TO OUR SHORES, THAT TRUE ROCKABILLY ORIGINAL **JOE CLAY** TAKES US FROM HIS HUMBLE LOUISIANA ROOTS IN 1951 TO HIS MUSICAL RESURRECTION IN THE MID-'80S. **DOLLIE SIMPSON** HAS THE QUESTIONS...

oe Clay is one of those classic stories of almost was. Born Claiborne Joseph Cheramie in 1939, in the tiny town of Gretna, Louisiana, 'Joe Clay' was bitten by the musical bug at a young age. After a local radio gig led to a call from RCA, and a recording session in Houston, Joe found himself travelling to New York for further recording and an appearance on the esteemed The Ed Sullivan Show - months before Elvis would make his famed appearance. In typical 'almost was' luck, the strict Ed Sullivan asked Joe to play a cover of The Platters' Only You, rather than his own feisty version of Duck Tail.

Despite having moderate success with *Duck Tail* and *Sixteen Chicks*, among others, poor management and stiff competition from the likes of Elvis and Carl Perkins never allowed Joe to achieve the heights he should have. RCA would later release him and a discouraged Joe retreated to Bourbon Street where he played five nights a week, and drove a school bus to make ends meet. It's here we fast-forward 30 years to when a London businessman rediscovered Joe Clay and booked him for his first-ever European tour.

Joe Clay now has his second chance at stardom, and he travels the world playing all the rockin' festivals – and all the while he remains humble and grateful to his 'super fans' for his continued success. Here we have his enthusiastic take on



music and career, along with a multigenerational look at the rockabilly scene.

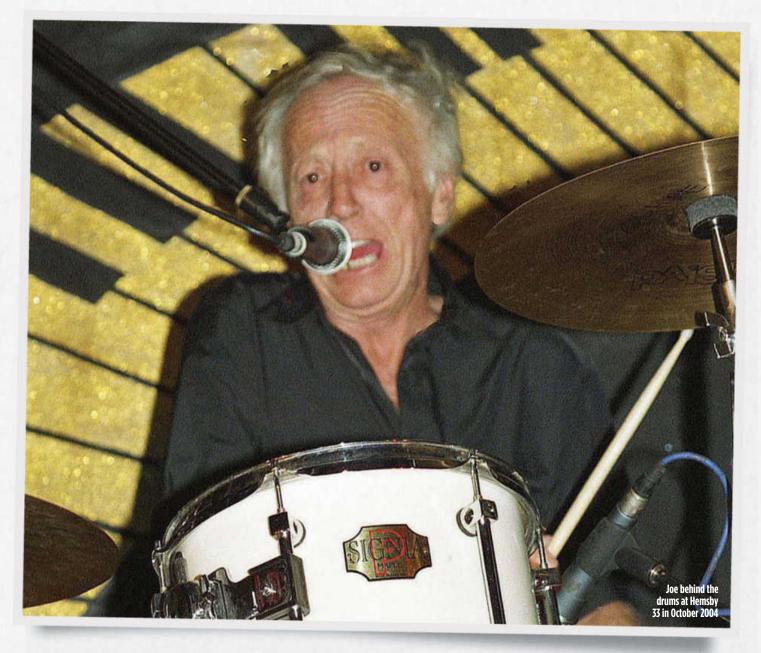
### You started playing really young. How did you get into the music industry?

Well, when I was 12 years old or a little earlier I always got in a lot of trouble because I played my pencils on the desk like you play the drums. My parents always took me to a hillbilly place on Sunday. I watched this hillbilly band and I told my dad, I said, I think I can

play those drums that guy is playing. My dad asked the guy if I could try and the guy said, "Can he play?" And my dad said "Yeah, I think he can." So I got up and I played just like I do now. It came so natural. Like I had been playing my whole life.

### Do you remember what that hillbilly place was called?

Hmmm... come on... come on... The Moonlight Inn!



### People from my generation envy people like you for getting to be a teen in the 1950s. What do you think about when you look back to the '50s?

Trying to compare it to today, I think it's better now. During my days we were kinda laid back. They had the jitterbug and all that, but the fans today are really into it, really strong. Especially overseas, it's crazy. Every time I go there it seems to be getting bigger. I remember that when I started in '86, I played to about 150 people. I kept going back overseas about twice a year. Then the crowd grew to 500, then 700, then this year in June I went to England it was 20,000. I said, whoa! I noticed that over my career going overseas, the parents would bring their kids and now they are grabbing this style of music today. The kids are getting into this music just like the parents did. It's great man, it's cool.

You are right that more people are getting into it, especially the younger generations. It's crazy!

### "When I walked out on stage the girls and even the guys were passing out. They thought I was dead! That was pretty awesome"

Well, let me tell you this little story while it is in my mind. The first time I went to Europe in '86 they took me to a parking lot and I saw all of these '50s cars and I saw all the boys and girls were dressing like the '50s. For a moment it was as if I'd gone back in time. You know I said, my god, is this real, or am I dreaming? Is this true, is this really happening? I finally came to my senses and I said, this is unbelievable, it's like I really am back in the '50s!

They brought me backstage and introduced me. Before then the lights were off on the stage, and then when they introduced me they put the spotlight on me. When I walked out on stage the girls and even the guys were almost passing

out. They thought I was dead! They couldn't believe it was really me, really Joe Clay. I will never forget that scene. That was pretty awesome.

### Wow! And that was already back in 1986... 28 or 29 years ago. You are still going and still playing for fans.

Yeah, in fact, while they were searching for me, I was playing lots of hotels. I did a lot of hotel work through my teenage years, for conventions. I was playing with a guy, and his son had been overseas with his own little band, and someone had told him that Joe Clay was really hot over there. He told the people overseas that I played with his dad. So when he came home he called me and told me that

I was big over there. I told him no, that was 30 years ago, that's impossible, that can't be really me they're talking about. That's likely somebody else who is using my songs and my name, that's not me. Anyway, about a year later the agent in Europe called me and he said, "I finally found you." He told me he had put an advertisement in every newspaper in the United States looking for me. I didn't believe it was me, I said, it can't be! That was 30 years ago, man! I asked him which songs are they, and he told me. I didn't quite remember them. They had to send me the record!

### So you didn't even remember your own songs and you had to have them send you the record? That's such a funny story, I love that. At that time you were recording those albums did you have any sense that the music you were making was revolutionary?

No. I had an idea that it would move a little bit, but then it didn't. So I lost faith in it. I stopped being Joe Clay and I got a little trio called the CJ Trio and did Top 40. We did that until '86. We played conventions and on Bourbon Street six nights a week.

### "This September I'm going to Japan. That's crazy. I didn't think rockabilly was doing anything over there, but I hear it's really big"

It's so sad to hear you say you lost faith in your music for a period of time, but we're glad that didn't completely stop you from making music. If you had to name a moment in time when you felt you 'hit it big', when was it? Was it in '86 when they found you again?

Yeah, it was when I went for the first time overseas in 1986 and found that scene. I said, wow, these kids are into something here. But I didn't think it would get as big as it's getting. I knew it would get big, but every year it gets bigger. More people are getting into the music.

### Was that the first time you had ever been overseas?

Yeah, that was my first time ever, but since then I have been all over the continent. I would say one of the biggest so far is that this September I'm going to Japan. That is really crazy. I didn't think

rockabilly was doing anything over there, but now I hear it's really big.

Yeah Joe, I hate to break it to you, but if you think the Europeans are crazy, just wait until you see the Japanese. You are not going to believe it. It's going to be insane...

Oh god, yeah, that's great!

### Who is the biggest name you have played with in your career?

Are you ready? Nat King Cole, Bobby Darin, Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, George Jones... because when I played in hillbilly bands we had a house band, and once a week one of these guys from Nashville would come in. Like George Jones, Jimmy Newman, Faron Young, and it goes on and on. I backed all of them! Fats Domino... wow! It's crazy when



### Listen up

### **Duck Tail/Sixteen Chicks**

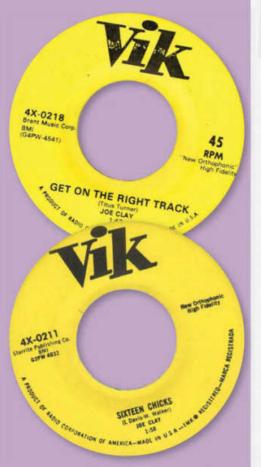
Recorded in the spring of 1956, Joe's cover of Rudy Grayzell's *Duck Tail* electrifies from the very beginning thanks to Hal Harris' opening guitar riff. Combined with a hard hitting snare beat and Joe's youthful vocals, it's hard to find a finer example of the rockabilly sound. *Sixteen Chicks* is the hard boppin' B-side recorded in the same Houston session at Bill Quinn's Gold Star Studio for RCA's subsidiary Vik Records. Despite the confidence in his voice that belied his experience, neither song gained traction in the charts.

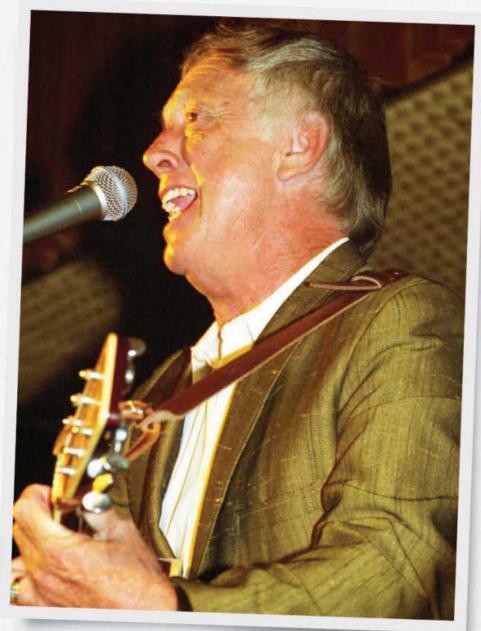
### Cracker Jack/Get On The Right Track

A month after the recording of *Duck Tail/Sixteen Chicks*Joe travelled to New York to lay down *Cracker Jack* in
RCA Victor Studio 1. This time he was paired with an
all-star cast of African-American rhythm players, most
notably Mickey Baker, whose bluesy guitar work helped
give the track a raw, driving sound. *Get On The Right Track* keeps on with the same hard rhythm and blues
tone, driven home by the dual session drummers Bobby
Donaldson and Joe Marshall. Once again sales were slim,
and RCA decided later to not renew his contract.

### The Legend Is Now

We're hard-pressed to not list Joe's other Vik recordings such as *Goodbye Goodbye* or *Slipping Out And Sneaking In*, but they weren't released back in the day – so we're going to go with his 2004 release *The Legend Is Now* on El Toro Records. All the songs on the record, minus one, were written by the band, comprised of various El Toro players. There is also a lengthy interview with Joe. The eponymous track tells you all you need to know about Joe Clay – he still cares about making rockabilly music.





### You played on the Louisiana Hayride. Tell us about that...

That was a just a regular job. The guys I played with there were just getting started. It was a gig we played once a week. One of my thrills in life was when I played in my hillbilly band. We played in Mobile, Alabama, at a lounge. So when me and the bass player went on break, I told him, let's walk across the street and listen to that other band. So we did. This guy was singin' and I said, this guy sings very good... and it was Hank Williams.

Wow! That's awesome, because he really didn't get to play that long. So the fact that you got to see him in that brief amount of time is really cool.

Yeah, he was really just starting!

We just saw you play Viva Las Vegas with Huelyn Duvall and Ray Campi.

You blew everyone away when you jumped into the crowd and sang to some pretty ladies. Then afterwards someone threw some lacy knickers on to the stage. Tell us about that...

Before I got out on stage the crowd was ready. I didn't even have to start them up, they were ready! You can't miss, man. It was one of the greatest thrills of my life. I will never forget that show. My super fans were awesome. That was the first time in 60 years of playing music that some lovely lady has thrown her underpants at me on stage. I loved it! Move over Elvis, Joe's coming!

We were all pretty excited because we are all there to see the legends perform. We want to see as many legends as we can, and we are honoured to be in the presence of someone who was making music in that time period. I'm only 27 so of

### "That was the first time in 60 years that some lovely lady has thrown her underpants on stage. I loved it! Move over, Elvis!"

### course I didn't get to see any of those bands back in the day. I am always really excited to see them now.

Oh, wow. That's great. That's something else that freaked me out, that story that I told you about when the girls passed out... well, I was singing *Sixteen Chicks* and they were all singin' as well, and that blew me away!

Yeah, we know all the words! Really, no new music is coming out from that time period, so we have been listening to the same songs for so long, and to be able to see them live is surreal to us. You have quite the travel schedule coming up: where can we see you next? I'll be playing on August 1st in Italy for the Motorcycle Gang Jamboree. Then on September 10th, it'll be Japan. I'll be in Finland for Rock'n'Roll Nights #22 on

October 10th, and also in October I will be performing at Gretna Fest back in my hometown.

### What songs can we look forward to hearing you play at these upcoming shows?

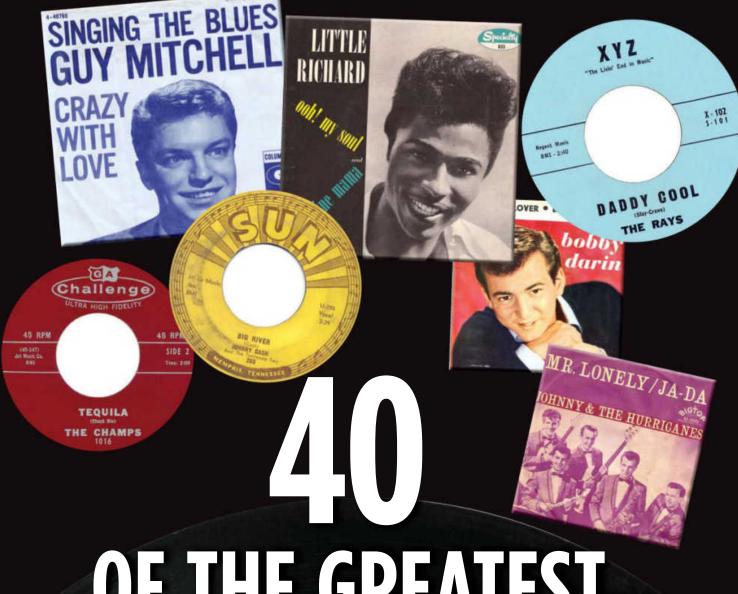
I'm going to be doing *Duck Tail*, *Sixteen Chicks*, *You Look That Good to Me, Jellybean, Dog Gonit, Goodbye Goodbye...* It's gonna rumble, I can tell you that!

### I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to me...

No problem babe! I am so glad you called. I get all stoked when we start an interview like this because everything starts coming back to me again and it starts revving me up! \*







## OF THE GREATEST Killer Ps

**JOHN HOWARD** 

hey're the Fabulous Flips, the Hidden
Treasures. When pocket money was the
equivalent of 50p a week, and a single cost
27p, you could only afford a new record
every seven days, so when you'd spun the
topside until it was nearly white, you'd turn it
over. And just sometimes, you'd find a gem – a
dreamy ballad or a wild rocker even better than
the bumclutcher you'd bought with your girlfriend
in mind.

And what did the record companies have in mind when they designated what side of the record was to get most of the marketing budget? Yet stamping a promo record with a huge letter 'A' did not mean those pesky DJs never spun the flip in public. So thank you, Kent Walton for playing Little Billy Boy by the Del Vikings on TV's Cool For Cats,

thank you Gus Goodwin for playing Bobby Darin's *Bullmoose* on Radio Luxembourg. I bought those singles for those great numbers, although the London-American label, the UK source for almost all US rock'n'roll would have preferred Kent and Gus to play *Whispering Bells* and *Dream Lover* respectively.

Of course, when Gus played *Dance Me To Death* by The Hi-Liters and half the rock'n'roll fraternity in my home town rushed out to the record shop to buy it, the assistant couldn't find it. The reason? The topside was the anodyne *Cha Cha Rock*, and that's how it was catalogued.

A list like this is obviously completely subjective, and it could have included 20 Elvis records. We've limited El to just one. You probably have your own thoughts on this. If so, we'd love to see your choices!

### **BILL HALEY AND HIS COMETS**

### **ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK (DECCA 1954)**

The record that ignited the rock'n'roll conflagration – but, amazingly, Decca Records regarded this seminal record as the flip side of *Thirteen Women*. Bill had wanted to record the song while he was still with the tiny Essex label, but was vetoed, and the song was first cut in late 1953 by a group known as Sonny Dae And His Knights for the Arcade label. It had only modest success, so by the time Bill was with major label Decca he wanted another crack at what he believed was a potential monster.



Thirteen Women tells the post-atomic bomb story of the only man left alive along with the ladies of the title. A tad obscure, perhaps, and nothing like the rallying cry of the subsequent worldwide smash the flip became, sounding so good under the titles of the movie Blackboard Jungle.

### THE DEL VIKINGS LITTLE BILLY BOY (DOT 1957)

Considered by some to be the first multiracial vocal group, The Del Vikings were formed by a group of airforce buddies who broke through with the solid stroller Come Go With Me.

This success instigated a series of hits which included Whispering Bells, an item much prized by collectors of niche doo-wop who relish any recording featuring bells – of which there are many.

However, Whispering Bells pales into insignificance compared with the stormer on the flip, which deserves to be in anyone's Top 10 doo-wop rockers. With unintelligible nasal vocals,

booting sax, a very fast tempo, and played at the volume it deserves, it was guaranteed to evoke massive negative parental reaction in the 1950s... and will do the same if played to grandchildren today.

### to evoke massive negative parental re played to grandchildren today.

**HOUND DOG (RCA 1956)** 

What's Hound Dog doing on this list?
Surely it was a huge hit in its own right?
Yes, it was – but when RCA decided to release Elvis' version of Big Mama
Thornton's blues, a song that EAP had been using to close his live act for months, they decided Don't Be Cruel was the A-side. Yet, crucially, what RCA had failed to take into account was the fact that Elvis had performed Hound Dog on US national television with a bump'n'grind routine that had horrified middle America – and



When the single was released, buyers promptly made their own decision as to what side they wanted, so RCA quickly re-configured the release as a double A-side, and both songs were charted in their own right. At that point, *Hound Dog* became the biggest seller for the Pelvis to date.

### **ROY ORBISON**

### **CANDY MAN (MONUMENT 1961)**

Texas rocker Roy had no great success with his wilder sides and it was only when he switched to lachrymose ballads from Only The Lonely onwards that he was feted as a major star. So it was perhaps unsurprising that the beautifully-performed original Crying should have been nominated as the major side to continue an unbroken run of rockaballad charters.

But hidden on the flip of the
London-American (and US Monument)
release was a solid mid-tempo rocker,
Candy Man, with a dominant harmonica figure,
and a memorable chorus. This was soon picked up

by many UK beat groups who featured it in their sets before Brian Poole and the Tremeloes chose it as the A-side of a Decca single and placed it in the Top 10. Composer Roy made no complaint about the royalties that rolled his way.



### **JACK SCOTT**

### **LEROY (CARLTON 1958)**

Canadian-born, Detroit-raised Giovanni Scafone, recording under the name of Jack Scott, had only regional hits with ABC-Paramount with the solid numbers Baby She's Gone and Two Timin' Woman, so when he switched his allegiance to the New York-based Carlton label – they went with the ballad My True Love, a number which duly soared to the top of the charts.

But our Jack hadn't really stopped rocking, a fact neatly proved by the flipside Leroy, a song originally entitled Greaseball, about a 'J.D.' (juvenile delinquent, try and keep up) who's back in jail again.

Scott went on to have no less than 19 consecutive hit singles in the next four years, all but one self-composed, and he remains active today, with both his voice and his frame unaltered by the passing years. *Leroy* remains in his repertoire, and occasionally he will switch back to that original title.

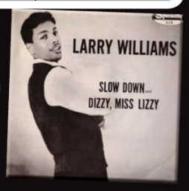


WHEN RCA RELEASED DON'T
BE CRUEL THEY FAILED TO
TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE FACT
THAT ELVIS HAD PERFORMED
THE B-SIDE HOUND DOG
ON NATIONAL TV WITH A
BUMP'N'GRIND ROUTINE
WHICH DELIGHTED THE TEENS

### **LARRY WILLIAMS**

### **SLOW DOWN (SPECIALTY 1958)**

If Elvis Presley provided great value for single buyers, Larry Williams provided an equally good deal, with all his early singles comprising two excellent tracks. Originating from New Orleans, and a one-time valet for Lloyd Price, Larry's breakthrough on the West Coast Specialty label was with Short Fat Fanny/High School Dance, which aped the recently retired Little Richard's style. But the B-side that persists is the flip of Dizzy Miss Lizzy, Slow Down, recorded by dozens of groups, and still played on the rock'n'roll circuit today.



CAST IRON ARM

PEANUTS WILSON

Larry appeared live in the UK in the 1960s teamed with Johnny 'Guitar' Watson and passed on in 1980. He is said to be among the first pioneer rockers to die a millionaire... but it was claimed he made his million outside of music. 'Nuff said.

### **PEANUTS WILSON CAST IRON ARM (BRUNSWICK 1957)**

Peanuts, otherwise known as Johnny, was the diminutive rhythm guitarist in Roy Orbison's first band The Teen Kings, and recorded with Roy on both the Jew-El and Sun label versions of Ooby Dooby before the band broke up. When it came to his own recording on the US Brunswick label, his composition You Got Love was selected as the A-side, with the amusing fight song Cast Iron Arm relegated to the flip.



'Crash' Craddock, Conway Twitty, Brenda Lee, Loretta Lynn, Faron Young and Kenny

Meanwhile, Peanuts became a successful country songwriter, penning hits for Billy Rogers, among others.

THE WONDERFUL **LITTLE STAR MAY BE VITO PICONE'S** FINEST HOUR, BUT TURN THE SINGLE OVER AND YOU'LL IMBLE ACROSS **GETTING** ZY, ONE OF THE MOST **POWERFUL** VOCAL-GROUP JIVERS COMMITTED TO VINYL

### **BOBBY DAY**

### **OVER AND OVER (CLASS 1958)**

It was inescapable that Bobby Day's blindingly catchy *Rockin' Robin* would be the A-side of his follow-up to the hit Little Bitty Pretty One, and so it proved. However, buried on the B-side was an original that would prove to have the same 'legs' as the bird – a song which attracted only modest chart attention on its 1957 release in the States, but which soared like an eagle in the hands of the Dave Clark Five eight years later, who placed it at US number one.



A tale of a teenage record hop with amusing lyrics and superb vocal backing from Bobby's vocal group The Satellites, Over And Over is still worth playing... over and over. Multi-talented Bobby was also lead singer with the Hollywood Flames, and one half of the duo Bob and Earl.

### THE ROYALTONES WAIL! (JUBILEE 1958)

This teen instrumental group from Detroit started by writing their own numbers, first with Poor Boy, which came out on the Jubilee label in the States and on London-American in the UK. Fine as that catchy instrumental may be, it is completely overshadowed by the pounding flip, also a group-penned track, called Wail!

The group got no chart action in the UK, but placed Poor Boy, and one of its successors, Flamingo Express, on the Billboard charts, and the lads were included on national tours with some of the biggest names in the business. The delightfully-named Popoff

Brothers were a constant in an ever-shifting line-up which included in a later version guitarist Dennis Coffey, who sold a million with Scorpio in 1971. The Royaltones also provided backings for some of Del Shannons hits, including Little Town Flirt.

### ed lines WAILI

### THE ELEGANTS

### **GETTING DIZZY (APT 1958)**

You'll hear no word of criticism whatsoever from us concerning the wonderful Little Star, Vito Picone's finest hour, but turn the single over and you'll stumble across Getting Dizzy, one of the most powerful group-vocal jivers ever committed to vinvl.

If those two tracks had been separated for release, then the New York-based Elegants could have become two-hit wonders instead of settling for a sole chart placing, be it a number one with two and a half million sales. Although the group swiftly went their separate ways in the 1960s, Vito returned to the line-up in 1970,

Real Marie Pall. Ca., Inc. : Bidl 45-25005 APT 41-19014 GETTING DIZZY THE ELEGANTS employing back-up musicians, and they still work as a self-contained unit up to this day. Last year, Vito – who formed the group in Staten Island in 1956 – underwent heart bypass surgery, but is now back on the road.

### **GENE VINCENT**

### **BE BOP A LULA (CAPITAL 1956)**

Some mistake, surely? Be Bop A Lula was a Cantol huge hit, sold millions, attracted dozens of cover versions and revivals, and featured in the best rock'n'roll movie, The Girl Can't Help It. Well, don't tell us, tell Capitol Records. When they recruited Gene, a former sailor from Virginia, as their answer to Elvis Presley, they had just the song for him. It was entitled Woman Love, and with Gene's hotpotato-in-the-mouth vocals, near-theknuckle lyrics and a rockabilly backing, it was a sure chart hit - at least, until someone in that iconic tower at the junction of Hollywood and Vine pointed out the dodgy lyrics... and the fact that Gene's manager Sheriff Tex Davis had sent out promo copies of Be Bop A Lula to radio stations all over the country. The A-side

was quietly buried. Gene went on to a lengthy career in the US and UK, scoring more hits

GENE VINCENT'S WOMAN
LOVE WAS A SURE-FIRE HIT

- UNTIL SOMEBODY POINTED
OUT THE FACT THAT HIS
MANAGER HAD SENT OUT
PROMOS OF THE B-SIDE
BE BOP A LULA TO STATIONS
ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

### **JERRY LEE LEWIS**

### **DOWN THE LINE (SUN 1958)**

with Blue Jean Bop, Lotta Lovin' and Say Mama, among others.

Written by Roy Orbison, and originally entitled Go Go Go, the writer cut the song at Sun Studios in Memphis in 1956 as the flip to Ooby Dooby, but it gained national prominence thanks to a revival by the Ferriday Fireball two years later.

JLL also had it as a flip (this time Breathless took precedence), but as is usual with Jerry's singles, it's almost impossible to compare the quality of one side with another. One may be faster or slower than another, but they are uniformly excellent. Record buyers agreed, and Down The Line made a chart appearance in its own right.





### **ROY BROWN**

### PARTY DOLL (IMPERIAL 1957)

When Texas band The Rhythm Orchids approached Roulette Records for a deal, they submitted two tracks – *Party Doll*, with a vocal by Buddy Knox, and *I'm Sticking With You*, sung by Jimmy Bowen. Sensibly, they were released in 1957 as two separate singles with each lead vocalist credited, and both became hits.

When Roy Brown – the rhythm'n'blues pioneer who had given the world Good Rockin' Tonight back in 1947, followed by Hard Luck Blues, Rockin' At Midnight, Miss Fanny Brown and Cadillac Baby, amongst others – came to cover this



new-fangled rock'n'roll stuff, he stuck the two sides back together, using *I'm Sticking With You* as the topside, and *Party Doll* on the other. This 1957 Imperial release picked up sales in the sepia market but sadly Roy's moment in the sun had faded, and his style of blues shouting was no longer in style.

### **CHUCK BERRY**

### **WEE WEE HOURS (CHESS 1955)**

Chuck submitted this original song on his audition tape to Chess Records' Leonard Chess, thinking the song might fit in very nicely with the Chicago label's established blues roster. Leonard, however, was having none of these slow blues, and insisted that for his whole career Chuck should record uptempo top sides for his singles, relegating any blues to the B-sides.

Many of these could be included in this
Top 40 listing, but this particular number
defined the pattern. It was the flip side of his
first release *Maybelline*, and is an outstanding track
in its own right, featuring Chuck's superb guitar work
and more than able piano accompaniment from Chuck's lo

and more than able piano accompaniment from Chuck's longstanding keyboard player – and fellow Rock'n'Roll Hall of Famer – Johnny Johnson. The duo were featured on most of the hits from *Johnny B Goode* through to *Sweet Little Sixteen*. Hail Hail Slow Simmering Blues B-sides....

## CHESS WEE WEE HOURS CHUCK BERRY and His Comban 1604

### **BOBBY FREEMAN**

### **BIG FAT WOMAN (JOSIE 1958)**

San Francisco-based Bobby Freeman wrote the song *Do You Want To Dance*, and cut a simple version featuring bongos and piano, anticipating that this rough demo would be later improved upon. He cut the flip, *Big Fat Woman*, with a similar expectation but as it turned out the demo was considered already good enough for release on the Josie label, a contention underlined when it hit number two on the US rhythm'n'blues chart. The song had a life of its own: re-titled *Do You Wanna Dance* by both Cliff Richard and The Beach Boys, it reappeared on the pop charts twice in the 1960s, much to the



composer's credit, and there have been dozens of revivals since. No so the equally great but far more amusing flip; that has remained Bobby's sole property, and it appears on any number of compilations in its own right.

### **JESSE LEE TURNER**

### **SHAKE BABY SHAKE (CARLTON 1958)**

Texan Jesse Lee only recorded around 15 tracks, and among the worst of them all was his one and only hit, the 1959 novelty number *Little Space Girl*, crammed with daft speeded-up voices and special effects. However, on the other side of the record lay proof that Carlton Records had made no mistake when they originally signed the rocker, and his *Shake Baby Shake* will surely be remembered whenever the topside, whatever it was called, is forgotten.



The track was embraced in the 1970s rockabilly revival, along with an unlikely cover of the same song by Australian Johnny O'Keefe, whose cut defined 100mph frantic rock'n'roll. Johnny actually credited Champion Jack Dupree as the composer, but his version follows Turner's version as-close-as-this.

### THE KINGSMEN WEEKEND (LONDON 1958)

The Kingsmen were Bill Haley's Comets without Bill on this hard rocking and memorable instrumental which saw a fair degree of US chart action on the East West label. It was duly released in the UK on London-American when the bosses at Decca had a listen and decided to demote a proven hit to the flip. Instead, Better Believe It, with a shouted vocal chorus, became the A-side. There was nothing wrong with it at all, and if you bought the record for Weekend, you would have played it and enjoyed it. All the same, this was pointless reconfiguration, and



it disappeared. This was not the only time the Haley boys went out on their own sans their leader: check out *Everybody Out Of The Pool* by The Lifeguards. Incidentally, these Kingsmen did NOT cut *Louie Louie*.

WRITTEN FOR RICK NELSON'S
TEENAGE AUDIENCE, AND
WITH STARTLING GUITAR
FROM JAMES BURTON AND A
NON-STOP BACKING IT WAS
A STRONG CONTENDER FOR
A-SIDE STATUS

### **RICK NELSON**

### **BELIEVE WHAT YOU SAY (IMPERIAL 1957)**

The Burnette Brothers, Johnny and Dorsey, supplied this original song for Rick and yet, surprisingly, the topside chosen by his label Imperial was a cover of a cover, the Sonny Burgess version of Hank Williams' My Bucket's Got A Hole In It. There was a price to be paid, though: the A-side's lyric had to be bowdlerised to avoid the original's reference to the bucket's ability to BELIEVE WHAT YOU SAY hold beer. There were no such problems with Believe What You Say as the song, with its nice, safe reference to going steady, HICKY MELSON was written for Rick's teenage audience. With startling guitar work from James Burton, and Rick singing in ultra-cool mode over a won't-stop backing, it was clearly at the time, and today, a strong contender for A-side status. Rockabilly bands feature it still, and it was,

### THE CHAMPS TEQUILA (CHALLENGE 1958)

arguably, Rick's strongest rocking side.

Yet another case of a record company cutting a track as a B-side filler, then finding it on top of the charts moving a million copies before the proposed A-side has got off the starting blocks. The Champs were the first group to hit the top spot with an instrumental that was their first release – but it wasn't meant to be that way. Studio musicians at Challenge Records, owned by cowboy star Gene Autry, had been assembled in Hollywood to cut an eerie and excellent track entitled *Train To Nowhere* with Dave Burgess as the credited act. This Latin-style B-side was cut for the flip, and went

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45 RPM

45 RPM

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TEQUILA

(Chail Brig)

TEQUILA

(Chail Brig)

THE CHAMPS

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to number one in three weeks. Famously, Gene Autry rode Champion the Wonder Horse, and that's where The Champs got their name. They went on to carve out a career as one of the most successful instrumental combos of the rock'n'roll era.

### THE RAYS

### DADDY COOL (XYZ 1957)

You can't fault a record company for choosing Silhouettes by New Yorkers The Rays as the A-side of a single. After all, it was a huge hit for the originators, and an even bigger hit for two separate revivals by, respectively, Herman's Hermits (1965) and Cliff Richard (1990).

But who would have thought the flip side would also take on a life of its own? Anyone who bought the London-American release must have appreciated *Daddy Cool*, but none would have anticipated it could be a hit twice more 20 years later. But it was, thanks to UK-based Darts, and German-based Boney M.

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Angent Minish

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DADDY COOL

(Site-Creek)

THE RAYS

It was written for The Rays by Frank Slay and Bob Crewe, who also wrote the topside, and released the cut on their own XYZ label. The Rays had an equally appealing record on the same label in a humorous Coasters style entitled *Elevator Operator*.

### **JOHNNY AND THE HURRICANES**

**MR LONELY (BIGTOP 1961)** 

Sax player Johnny Paris formed his instrumental outfit in Toledo, Ohio, in 1958 with the aim of backing solo singers on recordings, but was persuaded to go it alone with the guys and forget the vocals. When they hit big with *Red River Rock*, an update of the standard *Red River Valley*, the template was set, and they rocked up every folk standard they could find.



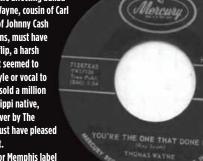
However, tucked away on the B-sides were a number of worthwhile originals, none more

affecting than this flip of *Ja Da*, a haunting organ-led instro that was covered by more than one UK beat group in the early 1960s. Johnny disbanded the group at the end of the decade, moved to Germany, and formed a new German Hurricanes who could have called themselves Die Hurrikans, but fortunately didn't.

### **THOMAS WAYNE**

### YOU'RE THE ONE THAT DONE IT (MERCURY 1959)

Anyone who bought the affecting ballad *Tragedy* by Thomas Wayne, cousin of Carl Perkins and brother of Johnny Cash guitarist Luther Perkins, must have been startled by the flip, a harsh stop-start rocker that seemed to bear no relation in style or vocal to the topside. *Tragedy* sold a million copies for this Mississippi native, and attracted a hit cover by The Fleetwoods, which must have pleased Thomas, who wrote it.



Wayne recorded for Memphis label Fernwood, and had releases on Mercury, but he proved to be a one-hit wonder, and latterly

worked as a sound engineer until his untimely death at the age of 31. A vindication of the power of this B-side is shown by the number of compilations and collections that include it... far more than the topside.

### LITTLE RICHARD

### **TRUE FINE MAMA (SPECIALTY 1958)**

As early as 1957 Little Richard was throwing diamond rings off Sydney Harbour Bridge, vowing to quit rock'n'roll and devote his life to Christ – but he continued to have rock'n'roll hits until 1960. How come? The answer is simple: producer Bumps Blackwell ensured Richard had stacks of recordings in the can, and he let them out little by little, keeping Mr Penniman in the public eye, even if he had stopped touring.



Ooh My Soul was a wild rocker of the type we had come to expect from

Mr Penniman, but the flip was a revelation. A solid chugging offering, its dance tempo was a stroller, and it had a girl chorus to push it along, unlike almost all Richard's recordings. Fortunately for all, Richard finally decided he could both preach and play rock'n'roll, and has continued to do so until this day.

MY SOUL WAS A WILD
ROCKER OF THE TYPE WE'D
COME TO EXPECT, BUT THE
CHUGGING FLIP SIDE WAS A
REVELATION, WITH A STROLL
DANCE TEMPO AND A GIRL
CHORUS TO PUSH IT ALONG

### THE DRIFTERS

**DRIP DROP (ATLANTIC 1958)** 

Post-Clyde McPhatter in The Drifters' timeline, and pre-Ben E King, Bobby Hendricks was the lead singer on this cut, which was written and produced by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller in 1958 for the group's thirteenth session for Atlantic.

But what on earth possessed this otherwise sure-footed duo when it came to releasing what was a memorable and excellent song, both well sung and well recorded?

Bewilderingly, it was relegated to the B-side of what is a near-novelty version of the standard Moonlight Bay (the rendition by the Billy Vaughn Orchestra is probably the best-known example). Five years after The Drifters' release, Dion's revival of became a Ton 10 record and other artists have re-cut it since so it

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DRIP DROP
[Lather - Walter]
THE DRIFTERS

example). Five years after The Drifters' release, Dion's revival of the same song became a Top 10 record and other artists have re-cut it since, so it has its rightful place in rock'n'roll history.

### **CONWAY TWITTY**

### I'LL TRY (MGM 1958)

A brilliant B-side provides a bonus for the buyer but it did mean very little radio play for tracks like Conway's Presleyesque I'll Try at the time. Instead, the rare rock'n'roll radio programmes that existed were awash with the career-defining ballad It's Only Make Believe, which has gone on to become a much-recorded modern standard.

MGM Records, to their credit, stayed with *It's Only Make Believe* in its yearlong crawl to the top of the charts, and four million sales

Conway Twitty continued to release double-sided charters which often combined a

ballad with a rocker, including the dramatic Make Me Know You're Mine, C'est Si Bon and Mona Lisa. Twitty, born in Mississippi, remained at the top of the entertainment tree for the rest of his life before hie passed on in 1993.



### **ARTIGK** WILLIS

### **HANG** UP MY ROCK'N'ROLL SHOES (ATLANTIC 1958)

Ougpably one of the best songs ever to be written on the subject of rock'n'roll, Hang Up My Rock And Roll Shoes was ignominiously tucked away on the B-side of the highly commercial What Am I Living For, so it must have been a real headache in Atlantic label's New York headquarters as to where to place that all-important 'A' sticker to indicate which side the DJ should choose to stick the needle on.

Still, both sides sold well, but not quite as well as Chuck's *CC Rider* from the previous year, which topped most known charts. Chuck,

known as 'the King of the Stroll', hailed from Atlanta, Georgia — as was the great blues singer Ma Rainey, who recorded that catchy *CC Rider* number before he was born. Chuck did not enjoy the success of this record for long. It was cut and released in 1958, but he passed on in the same year.



# IF ANY RECORD COULD CLAIM TO **DEFINE THE SOUND OF ATLANTIC** IT'S SURELY RUTH BROWN'S **MAMA (HE TREATS YOUR DAUGHTER MEAN)**, BUT THEY MADE IT THE B-SIDE OF THE POPPY **MAMBO BABY**

### JOHNNY CASH BIG RIVER (SUN 1957)

One of JR Cash's most familiar numbers, this self-penned tale of a trip down the Mississippi from St Paul to New Orleans was placed on the B-side of the poppy Ballad Of A Teenage Queen — arguably a catchier number, but surely atypical of this giant talent.

Still, Sun was proved right when Teenage Queen, written by producer Cowboy Jack Clement, topped the country charts, but at least in America Big River also got its own separate chart placing, rising to number 14.

It should be noted that Johnny Cash had a

certain amount of previous form when it came to B-sides that were destined to land butter side up. Both Folsom Prison Blues and Get Rhythm appeared first on near-forgotten topsides, while each has become a classic. Big River attracted more cover versions than we have space to list.

## EST AND VIOLENT VIOLEN

### RUTH BROWN MAMA (HE TREATS YOUR DAUGHTER MEAN) (LONDON 1955)

If any record could claim to define the distinctive sound of the Atlantic label, then the tambourine-led 1952 *Mama (He Treats Your Daughter Mean)*, an American number one for Ruth Brown, the lady frequently dubbed 'the Queen of R&B', would surely be up there with the top contenders for the title.

So when the UK's London-American label decided to release the recording in 1954, what did they do? They made it the B-side of the decidedly pop-oriented Mambo Baby, which promptly sank without a trace. Mama (He Treats Your Daughter Mean) was the

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second million-seller for this Virginia native who, like most of her generation, started her singing career in church and went on to become one of the biggest names at the Harlem Apollo. She was adept at warbling blues, jazz and R&B, and latterly became a Broadway star, too.

### **MICKEY AND SYLVIA**

### I'M GOING HOME (GROOVE 1956)

I'm Going Home turned up on the flip side of the huge ballad hit Love Is Strange, performed by two of the biggest names in the game.

Mickey Baker was a highly respected blues guitarist, while Sylvia Vanderpool not only had solo hits in her own right in the 1970s like *Pillow Talk*, but also ended up owning the mighty Chess Records — and after she formed Sugar Hill Records, was described as the 'mother of hip hop'.



Going Home is a heavy sax-driven blues number with a superb solo from Mickey, who left

the States for Paris in the 1960s and seldom returned. *Love Is Strange* was written by Bo Diddley, and covered in the UK by Lonnie Donegan. He wouldn't have dared to go anywhere near the B-side.

### **NEIL SEDAKA**

for this success.

### **NO VACANCY (RCA 1958)**

RCA probably made the right decision when they chose *The Diary* as the plug side of this 45 since the somewhat sappy ballad, written by Sedaka for Little Anthony & The Imperials, was clearly aimed at the teen market. Not so the flip, which was adult in every sense, as Neil bemoans the fact that they are tearing his building down and he can't find another apartment. 'I could budget myself, scrimp and save to get along,' he laments, 'It ain't no fun givin' up wine, women and song, so I'll have a roof above my head... but under those conditions I'd rather be dead.'

apartment. 'I could budget myself, scrimp
and save to get along,' he laments, 'It ain't
no fun givin' up wine, women and song, so I'll
have a roof above my head... but under those
conditions I'd rather be dead.'

\*\*No Vacancy\* is a solid mid-tempo rocker driven
along by Neil's own piano pounding, and was the immediate
predecessor of the wild I Go Ape, which put the young singer on the musical map the
first time around. Sedaka had a second bout of fame in the 1970s, crediting Elton John

### **GUY MITCHELL**

### **CRAZY WITH LOVE (COLUMBIA 1956)**

Detroit-born Guy Mitchell recorded a song called *Rockabilly*, which isn't and wasn't rockabilly at all, but this flip side, found on the back of his version of the much-covered Singing The Blues, certainly could claim to be. It was bootlegged in the 1970s on an EP series variously named 'Fed' or 'Reb' by music fans possibly unaware of Guy's past as the hit recorder of such nonsense as 1952's She Wears Red Feathers (often suffixed with '...And A Hooly Hooly Skirt' after the song's opening line).



Mitchell, born Al Cernik, was one of the biggest pop stars of the early 1950s and avoided being swept away by the tide of rock'n'roll with a series of sensibly-chosen covers, among them the topside of this, and *Knee Deep In The Blues*, both of which attracted UK versions by home-grown Tommy Steele.

### **BOBBY DARIN**

### BULLMOOSE (ATCO 1959)

Long before he became a cabaret crooner, this Italian-American was happy to try on any number of vocal styles to find out how they fitted.

Dream Lover, a number one record, is a fairly dramatic pop ballad, but on the flip is a solid rocker in tribute to a two-fisted piano player who is clearly not Bullmoose Jackson, because he played the sax. Multi-instrumentalist Bobby could have hammered the keys on the track, but in fact it's Neil Sedaka.



Darin, born Walden Cassotto, broke through with the novelty hit Splish Splash, and had a whole series of excellent self-penned rockers, like Queen Of The Hop and I Want You With Me (the latter song was actually covered by Elvis). Later on Darin tended to favour country and folk material, and appeared in a number of films.

### **RITCHIE VALENS**

### LA BAMBA (DEL-FI 1958)

Richard Valenzuela, to give him his real name, had a recording career which lasted just eight short months, but during this time he found the time to cut both ballads and rockers and even, it is claimed, managed to kickstart the Chicano rock'n'roll movement.

His sole UK hit was the selfpenned ballad Donna, which made a measly one-week showing at the bottom of the Top 30. On the flip was this Spanish language offering that Ritchie had adapted from a Mexican folk tune and it was a huge US hit, with Twist And Shout later being based on its melody.



Ritchie died aged just 17 in the plane crash that also claimed Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper. In the wake of the biopic of Ritchie, RCA reissued La Bamba in the 1990s, and it, too, made a one week appearance in the charts.

### **TOMMY BRUCE**

### I'M ON FIRE (COLUMBIA 1960)

Gravel-voiced Tommy Bruce was a Covent Garden vegetable market porter and would-be singer who was a neighbour of songwriter Barry Mason, who suggested he might usefully revive Fats Waller's Ain't Misbehavin'. He did, and had a hit on the UK Columbia label.

One of the less successful follow-ups was Broken Doll. I'm On Fire, written by Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman was on the flip, opening with ringing bells and Tommy's declaration: "Let them fire engines roll, doll..." The whole song rocks like an earthquake, and it is ideally suited

to Tommy's somewhat harsh tones. Producer Norrie Paramour must have just discovered the special effects box, because there are bangs, crashes, bells and finally an explosion at the end of this most impressive rocker.

### **JIMMY REED**

### BABY WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO (VEE JAY 1959)

By the time Top Rank finally got around to issuing Jimmy Reed's Vee-Jay recordings, he had already become the biggest selling blues acts in the States with hits like *Honest I Do* . For some unknown reason, the company decided to release Caress Me Baby as the topside, and hide what was destined to become a blues classic on the reverse side.

No other versions of Caress Me Baby are known to exist, but the flip – also sometimes known as Peeping And Hiding or You Got Me Running - has been cut by Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, the Everly Brothers,

Etta James, and dozens of others. A deceptively simple gutbucket blues, it features composer Reed's slurred vocals and some highly tasteful guitar from his long-time collaborator, Eddie Taylor.



TOMMY BRUCE'S I'M ON FIRE ROCKS LIKE AN **EARTHQUAKE**, AND PRODUCER NORRIE **PARAMOUR** MUST HAVE DISCOVERED THE SPECIAL **EFFECTS BOX**: THERE ARE BANGS, CRASHES, BELLS FINALLY AN EXPLOSION

### **CARL MANN**

### **ROCKIN' LOVE (PHILLIPS INTERNATIONAL 1958)**

Tennessee's Carl Mann was just 14 years old when he cut his own composition *Rocking Love* for the tiny Jaxon label, but since only 400 copies were pressed, we'll pass on that.

Instead, we'll consider Carl's second hit, a rocking reworking of the standard *Pretend*, and turn that over to find the best known cut of *Rocking Love*. By now Carl is all of 16, and since he's signed to Sun label subsidiary Phillips International, his records are being released in the UK on the London-American label.

American label.

Rocking Love is a great little number, far more
appealing than its flip, with some catchy if rudimentary piano pushing it along. Carl,
who seems to have won his recent battle with ill-health, still appears in concert today,
but sadly seems reluctant to include this fine song in his sets.



# THE ROSEMARY OF FATS DOMINO'S BEAUTIFUL **SONG FOR ROSEMARY** WAS HIS WIFE AND MOTHER OF HIS EIGHT CHILDREN **ANTOINE**, ANTOINE, ANDREA, ANATOLE, ANOLA, ADONICA AND ANTONIO

### **RON HOLDEN**

### MY BABE (DONNA 1959)

A single string plucked on an electric guitar descends for 11 seconds before an entirely unexpected sax and piano blast away to the 30-second mark, upon which Ron makes his vocal entrance on a self-written song with, let's be frank, fairly daft lyrics. We are delighted to learn that his babe has a short fat fanny and an Annie beat, but that still doesn't give us a proper picture of the woman in question.

This song was the flip to the ballad *Love You So*, and if we were to compile a list of one-hit wonder solo male ballads, it would be in the

top five. Ron's band The Thunderbirds get a label credit on the Donna label release, and, oddly enough, an entirely different Fabulous Thunderbirds – the Austin, Texas blues combo – revived this in the eighties.



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### **CLIFF RICHARD**

### **MOVE IT (COLUMBIA 1958)**

Cliff's debut topside for Columbia was due to be a cover of Bobby Helms' US hit Schoolboy Crush until TV producer Jack Good heard Move It, and insisted Cliff perform it on his TV show Oh Boy. So the single was flipped.

The song was written by
lan Samwell, guitarist with The
Drifters, Cliff's backing band,
on the top of a bus en route to a
rehearsal at Cliff's house. A British
rocker to give the Americans a run for
their money, *Move It* made number two on
the UK charts and kickstarted a career for Cliff

The part of the first that the first

The Drifters finally found out there was an American group with the same name and changed their name to The Shadows... without discovering there was an American group called The Shadows, who backed Bobby Vee.

### **LAVERN BAKER**

### **VOODOO VOODOO (ATLANTIC 1961)**

Nothing so weird as wandering around Debenham's department store around Hallowe'en and hearing this coming out of the in-store music system. It was impossible to find back in the day, because the record was always only listed by its A-side Hey Memphis, Lavern's answer song to Elvis Presley's Little Sister.

Voodoo Voodoo has great lyrics, a driving beat, and Lavern was never in better voice. Unfortunately, the only time she ever sang it was when she recorded it for Atlantic, and she steadfastly refused to include this storming classic in live performance. Maybe if it had sold the million it deserved, the former Little Miss Sharecropper might have changed her mind. But the song lives on, included in many seasonal compilations released to mark October 31.

### **FATS DOMINO**

### **SONG FOR ROSEMARY (ABC 1963)**

There are dozens of contenders for the title of the best Fats B-side. He was the second best seller in the rock'n'roll era to Elvis Presley, and every side he cut was a joy. He had five million sellers before 1955 dawned. So why did we go with this fairly obscure B-side, cut as the flip to Red Sails In The Sunset during his mainly unsuccessful sojourn with ABC Paramount label, recording in Nashville? Rosemary was Fats' first and only wife, the mother of his eight children Antoinette, Antoine III, Andrea, Andre, Anatole, Anola, Adonica, and Antonio (notice a pattern there?) and this sentimental instrumental brings

a tear to the eye. A beautiful, beautiful melody, wistful and moving... and if you don't have a copy of the record, then we suggest you Youtube it forthwith.



### THE COMPLETE CONCERT RECORDINGS

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YOU'RE A HEARTBREAKER. I FORGOT TO REMEMBER TO FORGET and a new song LITTLE MAMA!

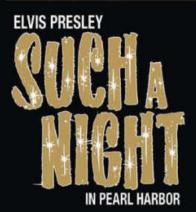
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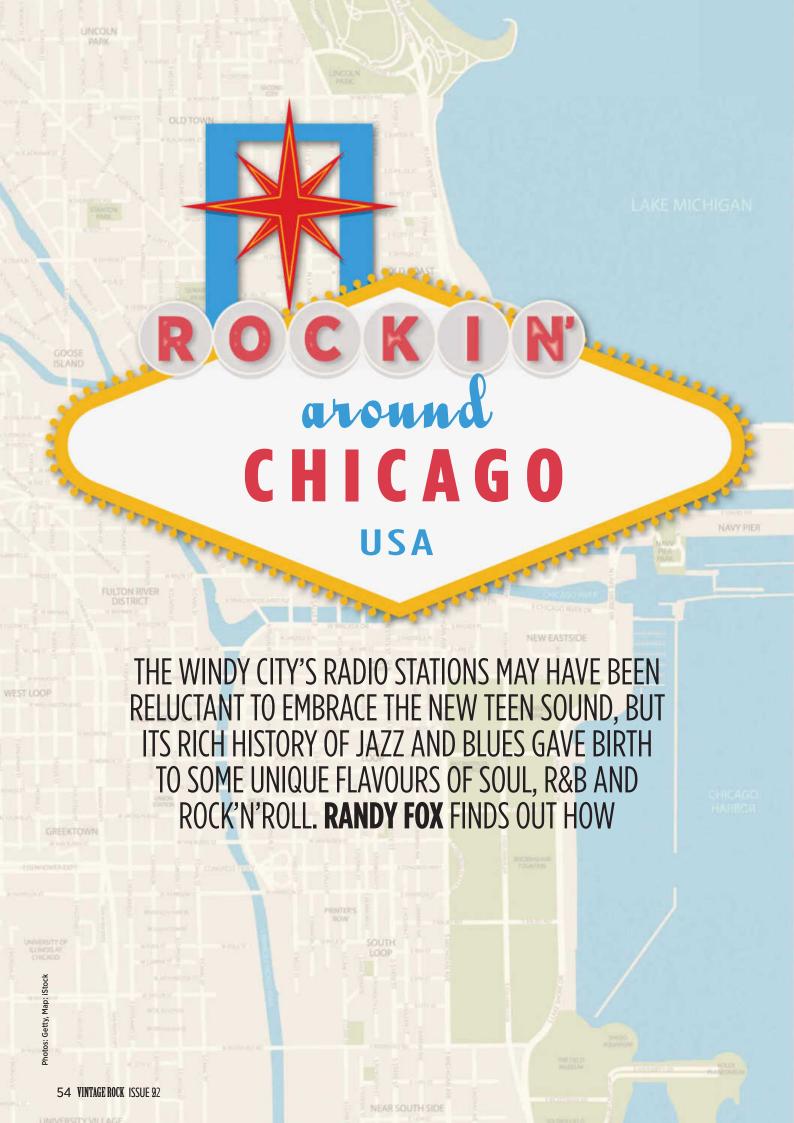














n the early fall of 1955 at the Chicago offices of Chess Records, orders were flying in fast and hard for *Diddley Daddy*, the second single by the label's recently discovered rock'n'roll star Bo Diddley. In just a few weeks, the rock'n'roll success story continued when Chess' newest star, Chuck Berry, zoomed to the top of the charts with his first single, *Maybellene*.

A few blocks away, excitement filled the offices of Vee-Jay Records as *At My Front Door* by the Chicago vocal group the El Dorados climbed up the charts, heading for the #1 position. Away from the South Side, white teenagers were rushing home from school each day to tune into *Bandstand Matinee* on their television sets. While the local program featured all the top pop hits of the day, there was also a generous helping of the new sound of rock'n'roll.

As in other cities across the United States, the buzz for the Big Beat was growing fast, but on Chicago's major radio stations there was little sign of the new beat. The city's two top-rated

DJs, Howard Miller on WIND and Art Hellyer on WCFL, both railed against the 'degraded' sound of rock'n'roll and filled the airwaves with the more acceptable sounds of Mitch Miller, Doris Day and Pat Boone. These guardians of 'good taste' didn't realise the war had already been lost, even though the airwaves of America's third largest city barely reflected that fact.

As a city that became renowned for the music, art and culture of African Americans, it is appropriate that the first 'Chicagoan' was a black man. Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a French settler of African descent, established the first permanent settlement near the mouth of the Chicago River on the windy shores of Lake Michigan in the early 1780s. The outpost grew quickly and was formerly chartered as the city of Chicago in 1833.

Chicago boomed over the next few decades, becoming an important transportation hub. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed a large portion of the city, but the modern metropolis of steel and concrete that rose from the ashes soon established itself as one of the largest urban areas in the US. Chicago's thriving industries were an economic magnet to many newly arrived immigrants, and by 1900, the city was home to large populations of Germans, Irish, Poles, Swedes and Czechs.

World War I brought an even faster expansion to Chicago's industries and attracted a wave of migrants from the South, including thousands of African-Americans. Although blacks who joined the Great Migration north from the Mississippi Delta found greater economic and educational opportunities, Chicago had strict segregation policies that required them to settle in specified neighbourhoods, mostly on Chicago's South Side or in smaller municipalities outside the city.

While segregation was the standard across the US to one degree or another, the divisions in Chicago seemed more defined than in many other cities.

The combination of greater freedoms and social isolation meant that blacks often had greater opportunities



in the greater metropolitan area. These migrants brought country music with them, and made the style a fixture.

In 1924, radio station WLS took to the air. Owned by Sears, Roebuck and Co., the world's largest mail order retailer, the station's call letters stood for 'World's Largest Store'. Sears sold everything from guitars to ploughshares, corsets to cookware, and it was said that the Sears catalogue was the second most common book in rural American households after the Bible. Knowing its audience, both in the Chicago area and across the country where WLS's 50,000W clear channel signal could be clearly heard, National Barn Dance was one of the station's first programs. A weekly live presentation of country music, the show inspired other barn dance programs like the Grand Ole Opry and the Louisiana Hayride. The program launched the careers of country music stars Gene Autry, Red Foley, Patsy Montana and many others, and made Chicago an important centre for country music during the 1930s and 40s.

In 1929, jazz and black gospel also found a spot on the dials of Chicago with the debut of *The All-Negro Hour* on WSBC, hosted by Jack L Cooper. Initially an all-live programme, Cooper eventually



### From the 1920s to the 1940s Chicago's South Side streets were filled with the sound of jazz and blues

for advancement in their own neighbourhoods, but even less cultural interactions with whites than in Southern cities where segregation was enforced by strict laws.

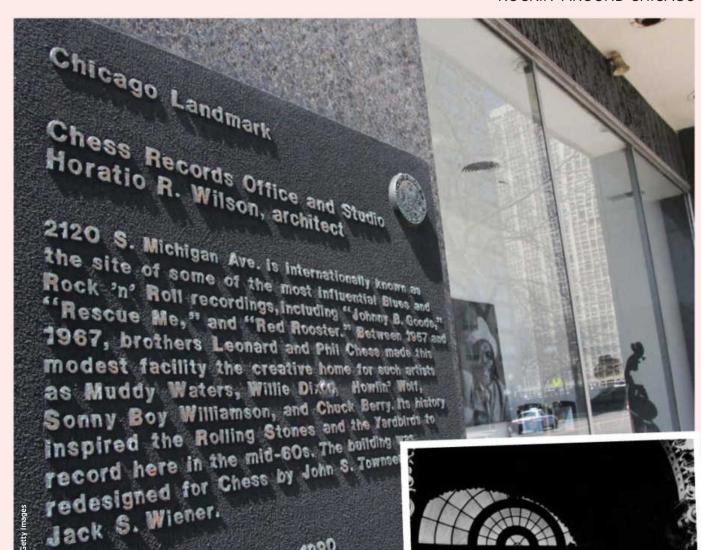
This dichotomy of freedoms and restrictions led to the concept of a 'Black Metropolis', a virtual city within a city. Chicago's black neighbourhoods became centres for African American music, art and culture. During the 1920s and through the '40s, the South Side streets were filled with the sound of jazz and blues, and the nightclubs along 'The Stroll' on State Street played host to jazz greats like King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, and boogie woogie pioneer Clarence 'Pinetop' Smith.

Southern blacks were not the only group attracted to the job opportunities found in the Windy City. Thousands of poor Southern whites also moved north with many of them settling in Chicago or

began playing records on the air, making him the first black DJ in the US. Although WSBC was much smaller than WLS, Cooper's show proved to be very popular with black listeners and in the mid-'30s he moved to a longer timeslot on WCAP.

Cooper found competition from Al Benson, who took to the air on radio station WGES in 1943. Like WSBC and WCAP, WGES mixed black-oriented programming with foreign language shows aimed at Chicago's diverse ethnic communities. Benson began with programs of black gospel music, but in 1945, he added a one-hour weekly program of rhythm & blues. Billing himself as the 'Old Swingmaster', Benson became a sensation, filling his programme with hep patter and speaking in a thick Southern accent that was indecipherable to many whites.

By 1950, Benson was broadcasting 10 hours each day on three different stations.



Other black DJs joined him on WGES -Sam Evans, Nathaniel 'The Magnificent' Montague, Herb Kent 'The Cool Gent' and Richard Stams 'The Clown Prince of Disc Jockeys'. All of these record jocks became a force in the Chicago music industry with Benson in the forefront as he sponsored large R&B reviews at South Side nightspots like the Regal Theater, Parkway Ballroom and the Pershing Ballroom. R&B also found a home on several smaller stations including WAAF in Chicago, WOPA in Oak Hill, Illinois and WGRY in Gary, Indiana.

As with most major US cities, Chicago was home to a number of independent records labels that sprang up in the years

following WW2. The first and largest was Mercury Records. Founded in 1945 by a partnership of music industry veterans, Mercury had access to a large distribution network and owned two record pressing plants that helped the young upstart to quickly become a major label. Mercury stressed a full roster of releases in all genres, and drew from the thriving South Side jazz and R&B scene.

1990

With Mercury signing many of the top jump blues and jazz artists in Chicago, the city's smaller labels turned to a new style of black music developed in the smaller South Side nightclubs and juke joints. Post-war prosperity brought a new wave of black migrants to Chicago. Many of these newly-arrived city dwellers retained a taste for a downhome version of the blues built around the electric guitar and harmonica rather than the honking saxophones commonly found in jump blues combos.

Chess Records built its success on this new Chicago blues sound. Owned by two Polish-American Jewish brothers, Leonard and Phil Chess, the label debuted in 1947 as Aristocrat Records and scored its first major hit in 1948 with (I Feel Like) Going Home by Muddy Waters. Changing the name of the label to Chess in 1950, it continued to rack up the hits with Chicago blues from Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson and more. Chess also scored big with masters it bought from independent record producers across the country. One of the biggest was Rocket 88 by Jackie

JOHNNY OTIS & HIS ORCH. STUMP & STUMPY BERRY BROS. - BILL SAMMUELS - KATT JAMMER

Chicago's Regal, which hosted

a vast array of acts before its demolition in 1968

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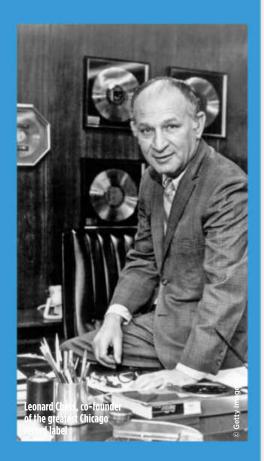


Chess Pieces: The Very Best Of Chess Records **Various Artists** COMMERCIAL MARKETING

**RECOMMENDED READING** Spinning Blues Into Gold: The Chess Brothers and the Legendary Chess Records **By Nadine Cohodas** PUBLISHED BY ST MARTIN'S PRESS

Deep Blues **By Robert Palmer** PUBLISHED BY PRENTICE HALL

The Pied Pipers Of Rock'n'Roll: Radio Deejays Of The '50s And '60s **Bv Wes Smith** LONGSTREET PRESS





Brenston. Recorded in Memphis by Sam Phillips, the rollicking combination of jump blues and hard-driving rhythms pointed the way to rock'n'roll.

Although Chess scored big sales with Rocket 88, the label seemed flummoxed by the arrival of rock'n'roll. As the 1950s wound on, Chicago blues remained popular with black listeners, but had little appeal to white teens. Chess played catch up, signing black vocal groups The Moonglows and The Dells, but the label's first homegrown rock'n'roll star came from the South Side streets. Ellas McDaniel, aka Bo Diddley, was central in bridging the gap between Chicago blues and rock'n'roll. By stripping blues down to its basic beat and combining it with testosterone-charged swagger, schoolyard rhymes and gospel-inspired call-andresponse, he created a template for primal rock'n'roll. Chess found even bigger success with Chuck Berry, who combined blues, boogie and country into the essence of rock'n'roll. Although Berry hailed from St. Louis, Missouri, 300 miles to the southwest, his link with Chess forever tied his sound to the South Side.

Chess' closest competition was Vee-Jay Records. Founded in 1953 by radio DJ Vivian Carter and businessman Jimmy Bracken, the label was an outgrowth of Vivian's Record Shop in Gary, Indiana and was one of the few black-owned record labels at the time. Although Vee-Jay found success with Chicago bluesman Jimmy Reed and others, the label concentrated more on black gospel and vocal groups from the Chicago area, scoring hits with The Spaniels, The Kool Gents and The El Dorados. They also scored big with soul-infused teen rockers from many local Chicago singers like Dee Clark, Betty Everett and Gene Chandler.

The Chicago area also produced local rockabilly blasts on a number of smaller labels. Mar-Vel Records, based in nearby Hammond, Indiana, produced boppers from Bobby Sisco, Herbie Duncan, Harry Carter and more, including the first recording of future heartthrob Jackie DeShannon (as Sherry Lee). Elvis soundalike Ral Donner also hailed from Chicago before moving on to New York.

By the mid-1950s, rockabilly and rock'n'roll could be heard on a variety of smaller radio stations that targeted country or R&B fans, but it was still missing in action from most of Chicago's major radio stations. The big beat was creeping on to pop playlists at large stations in New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and other cities, but Chicago radio remained very conservative and resistant to the new sound.

The cultural divide between Chicago's black and white populations accounted for a portion of this resistance, but there were also other factors at play. In the mid-1940s, the American Federation of Musicians opposed the spread of DJs on radio stations, arguing that every record played meant less work for musicians. While the musicians' union lost that battle across the US, in Chicago, they won the concession that turntables were considered musical instruments. Chicago radio DJs were not allowed to touch records or the turntable, and the older union musicians who were hired to operate them tended to hate rock'n'roll. As a result, many of the top radio stations in Chicago resisted rock — either banning the sound from their playlists entirely or limiting it to short, specific programs aimed at Chicago's white teens.



### With TV spreading rocknroll across the Windy City, radio WJJD became the first to embrace the new sound

Jim Lounsbury was one of the first white DJs to play rock'n'roll on Chicago radio, but he was limited to a one-hour show Monday through Friday on station WGN. Seeing the growing popularity for the new sound, Lounsbury took the big beat to a different medium. On 1 June 1954, he debuted Bandstand Matinee on WGN-TV. As with record hop programs in other cities, the program featured teens dancing to and talking about current records. Broadcast on weekday afternoons as teens were getting home from school, the show was a smash hit. Lounsbury moved to competing station WBKB-TV in 1957. Changing the show's name to The Record Hop, it continued to be a fixture of Chicago teen life until 1963.

With TV spreading rock'n'roll across the Windy City, something had to give, and in June 1956, radio station WJJD became the first Chicago station to fully embrace the new sound. Although WJJD had a strong signal, it was only licensed to broadcast during daylight, limiting the daily dose of rock'n'roll. Despite this restriction, and scowls from the station's unionised turntable operators, rock'n'roll radio proved to be a big hit. Lounsbury soon joined the WJJD staff, and along with DJs Ernie Simon, Del Clark and Stan Majors, WJJD became the favourite station for Chicago teens, sponsoring many record hops and package rock'n'roll tours in the Chicago area as well as parts of Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin.

As the '60s began, Chicago's resistance to rock'n'roll began to crumble. Radio station WLS, the former home of the *National Barn Dance*, embraced the Top 40 format. Billing itself as 'Mid-America's Bright New Sound', WLS kicked off its new format on the morning of 2 May 1960 with the thump of The Hollywood Argyles' *Alley Oop* booming out over the mid-west. Dick Biondi, who had built a reputation as a top rock'n'roll DJ in Buffalo, New York, was hired to lead the

new format and his on-air wildman antics quickly made him the top DJ in Chicago.

Three years later, the Chess brothers purchased radio station WHFC. Changing its call letters to WVON, it became Chicago's first radio station to feature black music and cultural affairs around the clock. With on-air personalities Herb Kent, Moses 'Lucky' Cordell, Joe 'Youngblood' Cobb and others, 'The Voice of a Nation' became one of the most influential black radio stations in the US.

As the 1960s proceeded, a new generation of white, American teenagers discovered the sound of Chicago Blues and soul as British bands brought their version of the sound back to its birthplace and revitalised the careers of veteran bluesmen for a new audience. A distinct Chicago soul sound also emerged that favoured sweet harmonies and highly orchestrated arrangements, drawing from Chicago's rich history of gospel and jazz.

Chicago now has a thriving music scene and has embraced the full spectrum of its rich musical heritage. The annual Blues Fest and many other events showcase the music born in the Windy City and its influence around the world. After decades of changes and innovations, the sounds of 'Sweet Home Chicago' continue to move hearts and bring dancers to their feet. \*\*



## The Art of THE PIN-UP

A BOOM TIME FOR MUSIC, THE MID-20TH CENTURY ALSO PROVED A GOLDEN AGE FOR PIN-UP CULTURE. VIEWED THROUGH THE FILTER OF MORE INNOCENT TIMES, THE PERFECT PIN-UP REPRESENTED DREAMS AND DESIRE, FANTASY AND ESCAPE, SAYS **JULIE BURNS**...

rized pictures 'pinned up' on a wall: pin-ups spanned all forms of illustration to photographs of glamour models, fashion models or actors. Arguably the first photographic pin-up pioneer was Frenchwoman Miss Fernande, an artistic nude who enterprisingly scattered her pictures round Parisian cafes, to be collected enthusiastically by soldiers on both sides of the First World War. In contrast, through the 1940s and '50s, pin-ups for the mainstream were often celebritydriven: studio portraits acted as a way of keeping fans interested and to an extent, presented both sexes. For every Marilyn, Mamie Van Doren and Jayne Mansfield, there was a Fabian, Tab Hunter or Troy Donahue. 'Beefcake' shots of 'hunky dreamboats' to keep the girls happy featured as much as 'cheesecake' pics of the 'latest starlet sensation'. Film photos flooded out of Hollywood to colour Britain's press, the likes of *Reveille*, Picture Post, and Picturegoer.

Aligning with guidelines set by 1930's Hollywood Code (the film world's self-censorship edict that guided on-screen morals through to the '50s), popular American pin-ups could be saucy but never full-on provocative. Seen as tame by today's standards, this was an era,

after all, when bedroom scenes had to be filmed with one foot on the ground. More permissive times – reflected in raunchier visuals – would come later.

From the '30s, fantasy art, or idealised 'dream girl' pin-up art, proved a phenomenon. Illustrators used most prolifically in pin-up advertising were

mascot of Uncle Sam's airmen. By 1943, she made other news – banned from view while smouldering in off-the-shoulder top, reclining in the hay in cult western *The Outlaw*. (Her publicity stills and 'cinemascopic cleavage' were doing the rounds some three years before Howard Hughes' movie even aired).

### Pin-ups took off with the advent of pin-up planes - WW2 bombers with Vargas girls on the fuselage

Earl Moran, Rolf Armstrong, Gil Elvgren and female pin-up specialist Zoe Mozert. Most celebrated and sensuous were George Petty and Antonio Vargas. The latter's stylised Vargas Girls were so popular in *Esquire* men's magazine that from 1942-1946, nine million courtesy copies were sent to serving US troops.

Pin-ups literally took off with the advent of 'pin-up planes' – US World War II bombers depicting Vargas girls or screen sirens on the fuselage as 'good luck' morale-boosters. In 1941, motion picture beauty Jane Russell was the first actress to be illustrated as chosen

The most iconic pin-up shot of the 20th century featured gorgeous Betty Grable and her million-dollar insured legs. The va-voom vision of her 1943 photograph featured her bathing-suited over-the-shoulder wink; reproduced over five million times, it was the most popular pin-up of the entire WW2 era. A pin-up guide of Grable was even used as a visual aid to map reading. To servicemen, the trend of pin-up-decorated fuselages, flying jackets and tattoos, to pinned-up lovelies on locker walls, became poignant reminders of home and hearth, and of womankind left behind.

### THE ART OF THE PIN-UP

This wartime artistry also paints a vivid case history of society's changing perceptions on pin-ups. According to one authority on the topic posting on www.selvedgeyard.com: 'By 1991 the US Air Force deemed pin-up girl nose art politically incorrect and had each and every painting removed from B-1s and KC-135s – and displayed them instead on the walls of HQ.' Though once viewed overall as positive and patriotic, the modern feminisation of the military presumably signalled a backlash - despite original muses such as Betty and Jane, who always championed their air-borne portrayals as an 'honour'.

Earthy burlesque, meanwhile, especially in its golden era in the US, can be seen as an animated homage to the pin-up. Its authentic roots were set in the tradition of musical theatre parody in England, with hammed-up Shakespeare and the rare, racy Victorian sight of female characters displaying their legs in tights. Though it disappeared towards the end of the 19th century, the American style flourished, along with increasing focus on female nudity by the 1940s. Where once soubrettes showed off their figures during skilled singing or dancing, in strip shows, performers were merely elaborately costumed before undressing. Burlesque content was modestly risqué and often relied on the exotic coochie dance - basically a 'bump and grind' number accompanied by sultry sax and distinctive drumming.

On a further musical note, burlesque cabaret was the early playing ground of Elvis's well-known drummer, DJ Fontana.





### The 1943 photo of Betty Trable's over-the shoulder wink became the most popular pin-up of the era

In trademark Presley numbers such as the low-down, slowed-down version of *Hound Dog*, Fontana's deliberately drawn-out beats are typically burlesque in style, abetted by Presley's sexy, almost burlesque, leg-swivelling delivery. It helped position Presley as the ultimate male pin-up – or as fans then described

him, 'the living end'.

As far back as the late 19th century, 'burlesquers' and actresses treated themselves as pinups by using photoadvertisement as selfpromotion business cards dispensed around wherever they were appearing. Some social historians agree that burlesque women self-constructed their identity to make themselves visible. Subversive to the times, this challenged the conventions of women's place in

public. As historian Maria Elena Buszek commented in her 2006 publication *Pin-Up Grrls*: 'the era's views on women's potential were inextricably tied to their sexuality, which in turn was tied to their level of visibility in the public sphere: regardless of race, class or background, it was generally assumed that the more public the woman, the more 'public', or available, her sexuality.'

Put another way, cultural commentator Joanne Meyerowitz considers that as far back as 1869, women have been divided in their opinion for, and against, the 'classic' pin-up - (as opposed to widespread disapproval of progressively raunchier content, seen largely as 'overt objectification'). Female support can be summed up, she says, as 'positive post-Victorian rejection of bodily shame and a healthy respect for female beauty.' Whereas those opposed to any form of pin-up argued that such images corrupted public morals, and that any scantily clad displays of women were undignified, verging on harmful.

An ongoing saga, no doubt, but back to ours. By the '40s, top burlesque proponents included Tempest Storm,



### Marilyn Monroe was as beguiling in stylistic studio shots as she was in the great outdoors

Lili St. Cyr, Blaze Starr, and Margie Hart. Best-known of all, Gypsy Rose Lee displayed an innovative approach to proceedings. With elegance and wit she became known for her hightone disrobing, which often involved 'intellectual recitations'. Focusing on the tease rather than the reveal, she performed by her mother's mantra: "You're a lady: make them beg for more - then don't give it to them." Considering herself a high class' stripper, she instead adopted the lofty term 'ecdysiast' ('a shedder of skin'). Lauded as 'America's most celebrated stripper,' in effect, she made the stripping pin-up sophisticated

enough to be absorbed into mainstream culture. Pocket pin-up Natalie Wood later played her in the 1962 Academy-award nominated movie *Gypsy*, based on Rose Lee's memoirs. After its mid-20th century heyday, however, stripping returned back into the shadows.

In the 1990s, Neo-Burlesque unexpectedly exploded on the cultural scene – embraced as nostalgic kitsch, or 'empowering' by a new generation of women. But back in the '50s, curve power was as potent as the encompassing Atomic Age, and Marilyn Monroe was its peachy-blonde ideal. For many the ultimate pin-up and sex symbol, her

studio-quoted rollercoaster statistics of

37-23-36 were relayed as "the ideal female waist to hip ratio of 0.66!" Prolifically filmed and photographed, Marilyn was as beguiling in stylistic studio shots as she was pictured in the great outdoors: healthful, natural and radiant. It was this girl-next-door vitality that proved so mainstream-friendly.

Far from the 'dumb blonde' she presented herself as, Marilyn was accomplished as a comedienne, as was her pin-up peer Jayne Mansfield, of '50s film fave The Girl Can't Help It. With an IQ as impressive as her measurements, Jayne was smart enough to articulate sex appeal as non-threatening - wholesome, even - to the more conservative British. In a 1960 interview with Robert Robinson for the BBC series Picture Parade, asked to define what being a sex symbol meant to her, she purred: "Sex appeal is a wonderful, warm, womanly, healthy feeling... it comes only from inside, it's nothing that's manufactured. It has nothing to do with measurements or lipstick colour... to me it's cleanliness and youth and effervescent desire to enjoy life... the vibrancy that you find present in a young kitten." She understood and knew the value of her pin-up publicity, though ultimately, was undermined by her own sexy image.

Other identikit blondes were legion: from B-movie queen Mamie Van Doren to 'Britain's Marilyn', Diana Dors. In fairness, Diana could be a great dramatic actress (see 1956 prison flick, *Yield To The Night*), yet delighted in being depicted as some relentless sex goddess. Her tongue-in-cheek wit was captured in her Venice Film Festival appearance of 1955 – sailing in a gondola in mink bikini and stilettos. Other actresses – Liz Taylor, Ava Gardner and 'sweater girl' Lana Turner – better



managed their professional roles, while seemingly not above being clicked in regular glamorous pose.

By now, pin-up style was inspiring figure-hugging women's fashion; even female pro wrestling ringwear, as worn by '50s sporting superstar Mae Young. Elsewhere, two main 'Bettes' sashayed in: brunette Bettie Page and blonde Betty Brosmer. The latter possessed an "insane hourglass figure of 38/18/36 inches!", as then lads' mags Glamor Parade and Peep Show loved to scream. Built like some retro Superwoman, she also possessed a high fashion hauteur. Winner of more than 50 beauty contests, gracing over 300 magazine covers to countless record sleeves, appealing to both men and women, she became the era's highest-paid

### Of all the mid-century pin-ups, Bettie Page has been reclaimed most as a style icon by 50s music fans

supermodel. Like Jayne Mansfield and her own pin-up husband, Mr Universe 1955 Mickey Hargitay, Betty became part of her own pin-up couple. By '61 she had married fitness guru Joe Weider, turned to bodybuilding and co-founded with him the International Federation of Bodybuilders.

Bettie Page, meanwhile, was altogether more underground and 'notorious'. Having launched in fetish, by the time she was photographed by Bunny Yeager, her modelling had mellowed to kitsch candids. Out of all the mid-century pinups gracing stage, screen and magazines, Bettie has been reclaimed most as a style icon by today's '50s music fans. She is also immortalised in artwork by Olivia De Berardinis and in the 2005 movie *The Notorious Bettie Page*. Clad in her trademark leopard-print, Bettie touched on popular themes of primitivism and exoticism – popular in *Tarzan* and *Sheena Of The Jungle* films, and via the furry

bikini-clad Racquel Welch in 1966's *One Million Years BC*.

Today, bikinis are seen as a pin-up staple, but a form of bikini or 'two piece' dates back to ancient times, while burlesque and vaudeville certainly employed early versions. The modern bikini, however, at least in its briefest form, was co-invented in 1946 by French engineer Louis Reard and fashion designer Jacques Heim. Famously named after the atoll of the US atomic bomb test, it was indirectly helped by the American government during the war: austerity measures meant a 10 per cent reduction in the manufacturing material used in women's swimwear. Yet their creation was hindered by society's scandalised

such a thing." He considers that the garment's acceptability 'if not respectability' came in 1962 via the Bond film *Dr No*, in which a sexily bikini-clad Ursula Andress exits from the sea. The more wholesome pinup responsible for popularising the bikini to American women was ex-Disney Mousketeer turned *Beach Party* actress Annette Funicello. Bikinis a-plenty were part of the bubblegum appeal of the new 'Beach party' movie genre she

represented. Though the innocent *Gidget*, 1959, and *Gidget Goes Hawaiian*, 1961, plus 1960's *Where The Boys Are*, were



### Decades on, glossy pin-up style is reclaimed by figures such as Dita Von Teese and Bernie Dexter

reaction. As Stuart Hylton points out in *The Little Book Of The 1950s*, some of the contestants in the first Miss World contest of 1951 wore them, prompting the threat of a boycott by some of the more conservative nations taking part (after which bikinis were banned). They were declared sinful by the Pope, but adopted in Cannes by Brigitte Bardot, who "was told by officials on one beach that two-piece bathing suits were not permitted. 'Which piece do you want me to take off?' she asked them innocently."

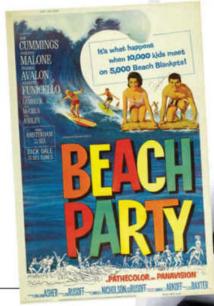
Hylton continues, 'As late as 1957 the American magazine *Modern Girl* advised its readers '... it is inconceivable that any girl with tact and decency would wear

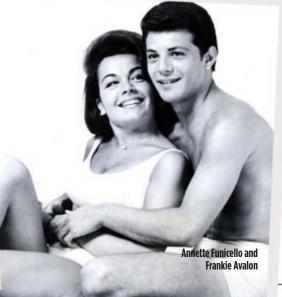
precursors, it was AIPs' rollicking run of silly but sweet, formulaic teen flicks that scored a smash, like some early *Baywatch*. Cue sun and sea, surf and songs, and sweet, gilded youth smiling their way through small plotlines and swimming costumes. Starting with '63's *Beach Party*, it starred the most popular sand-laden couple, Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello. As well as Frankie, the films showcased other musical wonders such as The Beach Boys (of course) to Little Richard (performing his co-written song *Scuba Party* in *Catalina Caper*).

The '50s were also a time of burgeoning air travel and the growth of tourism, a trend often reflected in women's dress

styles, from Chinoiserie to Hawaiian. Equally, Hollywood imported European beauties as its leading ladies - Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida, and slender Audrey Hepburn, intriguingly shaped against the pneumatic type of the time. The blonde sensation Brigitte Bardot debuted in 1956 with And God Created Woman, shockingly semi-nude. Two decades earlier, Austrian actress Hedy Lamarr - often critically acclaimed as 'the most beautiful woman on-screen' had come to Hollywood's awestruck attention in the same way through the notoriety of her briefly naked appearance in US-banned 1933 German film Ecstasy. Though nudity first flickered briefly across two early 1915 films, Hedy is popularly credited as the first notable, if coyly nude, woman onscreen.

Decades on, glossy 'pin-up style' is still popular, reclaimed and remodelled for contemporary times by figures such as Dita Von Teese (interviewed overleaf) and rockabilly model Bernie Dexter. Mostly photographed by husband and musician Levi Dexter, former lead singer of '70s rockabilly band Levi and the Rockats, Bernie appears to be giving 'cheesecake' pin-ups a modern spin. Modelling, designing and promoting vintage clothing, Bernie is one of the new breed creating a market that's accessible to all, not just male-dominated. In celebrating the female form, she has garnered much feedback; "Men comment on how my pin-up style takes them back to their youth, and women seem to like the fact that it is still possible to be sexy and alluring without being nude or raunchy." A regular '50s scenester, imagery and music naturally go together for Bernie, and she was recently the muse in Si Cranstoun's catchy 1950s Pin-Up Girl video. It seems the art of the pin-up is still very much alive and well. \*







### The Tease of MISS DITA

### **JULIE BURNS** MEETS THE PIONEERING LEADING LADY OF MODERN BURLESQUE

ike a subversive Snow White crossed with a contemporary Bettie Page, burlesque star and businesswoman Dita Von Teese has come a long way, from fringe to worldwide fame. With the accent firmly on fantasy into high fashion, Dita's become a celebrated stylistic pin-up for today. Responsible for the revival of the 'pin-up performance art' of burlesque, at a foxy 43 years old she shows no sign of hanging up the spangles. With a new book and vinyl out, and just prior to headlining her new spectacular at the Crazy Horse in Paris, let's meet the daring yet demure 'mistress of smoke and mirrors'...

### You began life as Heather Sweet from America's small-town midwest – how did your path to glamour begin?

In the 1980s, aged 12, I moved with my family from Michigan to California: to Orange County, which is well-known for its 'scene' culture - such as the heart of the rockabilly revival. It took me years to make friends and I was way behind classmates, taking ballet classes and still playing with dolls when they were already making out with boys! In 1990 I got involved in the LA underground rave scene through my then-boyfriend, a big rave promoter, and that's where I got my start: amongst the circuses and fairgrounds, making my name as a dancer. Between '92-'95, I got involved in the LA rockabilly scene.

### Who are your 'pin-ups'/style icons?

My first introduction to pin-up and Hollywood glamour was Betty Grable. Seeing her films and happy, glamourous image made a big impact on me as a child. Other influences are many – Hedy Lamarr, Marilyn Monroe, and Lauren Bacall. I went down different phases and borrowed from different eras to create my

own image. In the '90s, when recreating pin-up photos, I discovered Bettie Page, and that's when I had the idea of bringing back retro fetishistic glamour, to recreate a modern Bettie.

### You're credited as being responsible for the burlesque revival. What do you think distinguishes you from the rest?

I'm just the one that somehow managed to capture the attention. Catherine D'Lish in LA set a standard in burlesque costuming and settings. I credit her as being the one to push my career to a different place. I have a pretty distinctive style that we started using, such as sparkling fashions, big glamourous props – the giant martini glass and birdcages –

putting on opulent, extravagant shows. In fact, Catherine and I originally performed as a duet onstage in a champagne glass and martini glass respectively!

### You must have had some uproarious moments along the way...

With Catherine, the first time we performed at London's Erotica show the authorities shut us down. Due to an old English law about striptease in public we got told, 'you can have your clothes off but can't be seen to take your clothes off!' Ironic, given that we were wearing more than the average pole dancer there! Burlesque is all the rage now, so there's been an evolution and revolution since, in how it's accepted.



### Where do you see the line between the 'tease' factor and the 'sleaze' factor?

I'm not one of those women who look down on someone's show if it happens to be racier. I don't mind the controversial!

### Your style is more about recreating a refined classic showgirl glamour rather than the explicit, isn't it?

Yes, it's bringing nostalgic imagery to life: illusions and dreams. It's beside the point how explicit it is. It's up to the viewer. I like women setting their own boundaries.

### You have an alluring aura of old-school mystery: how do you keep a balance between public and private?

I say "no" to things all the time. That's the beauty of being my own show director. I no longer do some of the things that I feel I've been there and done – such as Bettie Page-style bondage pictures.

### How are you seen by feminists? Does pin-up and burlesque still have a place in today's politically correct world?

Those who don't get what I do or who my audience are haven't been to my



With your signature retro look and your latest book, you've changed the perception of female beauty – in Britain, at least – away from the suntanned blonde stereotype. Congratulations from pale brunettes such as myself on once again changing the way people think...

### "At's bringing nostalgic imagery to life: illusions and dreams. A like women setting their own boundaries"

show. The audience is 80 per cent female and the men are often on the arm of the women. Burlesque is no longer entertainment for men only, as in the '30s-'50s – which turns the feminist argument into a tailspin. They can't say 'this strip show is anti-feminist'. One person's 'degrading' is another's 'empowering'. If you don't like it, don't look at it!

### Having had a cameo in CSI, do you have any further acting ambitions?

I love all of showbiz – most especially stage performers and the art of self-creation: what you make of yourself.
I love Hollywood glamour, all the full Marilyn Monroe makeover, but as an actress you're speaking someone else's lines, using someone's lighting, having hair, make-up and style dictated. I'm a 'do it yourselfer'; I do my own lighting, props, hair and makeup, direct the whole show. I like to take full creative control!

After five years spent on the book, its nice it's achieved its aim of making the alternative more acceptable. I hope it shows the diversity of beauty. It's about retro glamour that looks good on all.

### You recently launched a vinyl compilation, Soundtrack For Seduction.

I'm inviting fans to get seduced by music that inspired me. Maybe people imagine I just listen to vintage music. I thought it'd be interesting to show the duality of the things that I like, so as well as tracks that feature my singing [like *Lazy* and *A Guy What Takes His Time*] there's Juliette Greco and Peggy Lee, and exciting new stuff – all on hot pink collector's vinyl!

### Did life turn out as expected?

No! At 15, in my part-time job as a lingerie stock girl, I never thought I'd have my own lingerie stocked in Selfridges, be on the cover of magazines, appear in Paris, or have such a level of recognition.

### **DITA'S DOINGS**



© Photo: Adam Rajcevich

### VAMP UP THE VINYL

Limited edition vinyl Soundtrack For Seduction – 12 tracks old and new, and some featuring Dita as sensuous chanteuse. Available on www.12on12. com/ditavonteese.



### PRINTS CHARMING

Burlesque And The Art Of The Teese/Fetish And The Art Of The Teese — Dita's first glossy book, in which she brings nostalgic imagery to life, \$39.99.



Dita: Stripteese — a novel photo flipbook depicting Dita in her favourite dances including the infamous Martini Glass and Bird of Paradise, \$30.



Your Beauty Mark: The Ultimate Guide to Eccentric Glamour – Dita's epic 400-page Vogue-recommended beauty guide gives her unique retro lowdown on hairstyles, makeup and all things glamour, \$45. All published by Harper Collins, available from www.harpercollins.com

### THE EURO SHOWSTOPPER

As the first guest star to perform to sold-out audiences at Crazy Horse Paris in 2006, Dita's back again, to star in and create her own classic glamour-packed show. From March 15th-30th, see lecrazyhorseparis.com

For further information on all things Dita, see www.dita.net

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## Classic Clbum THE "5" ROYALES The Five Royales

### THE COVER WAS CHEAP, INACCURATE, AND WRONGLY SPELLED, YET EVERY GROOVE ON THE THIRD AND FINAL ALBUM PROPER BY THE "5" ROYALES WAS CORRECT IN EVERY WAY. **RANDY FOX** LOOKS AT A TIMELESS CLASSIC...

n the early 1950s, black vocal groups ruled the R&B charts as an assortment of Robins, Ravens, Clovers, Dominoes, Drifters, Midnighters and more laid the foundation for rock'n'roll. Perhaps the greatest of these groups, and certainly the most versatile and idiosyncratic, were the "5" Royales. Emerging from a background in gospel music, the "5" Royales featured fantastic vocal performances, groundbreaking guitar work, and eloquent songwriting – all from within the membership of the group. It's a trifecta that no other vocal group matched, and their influence has continued for decades.

The story of the "5" Royales began in the early 1940s when Lowman Pauling and Johnny Tanner joined the Royal Sons Quintet, an established gospel group in the Winston-Salem area of North Carolina. Over the next few years, the group experienced several line-up changes while also building a loyal local following. In 1951, they headed north for the bright lights of New York City and a contract with Apollo Records.

After their first single flopped, Apollo producer Carl LeBow convinced them to try their hand at secular material, and the "5" Royales were born. The first release under their new identity hit in a few regional markets, but the follow-up, *Baby Don't Do It* zoomed to the #1 spot on the Billboard R&B chart. Just as it dropped from the charts, they repeated their success with another chart-topping single, *Help Me Somebody*.

By this point, the "5" Royales consisted of Lowman Pauling, Johnny Tanner, Obadiah Carter, Jimmy Moore, and Otto Jeffries. Tanner most often took the lead vocal spot with his raspy and powerful tenor, while Pauling held down the bass vocals and played electric guitar; Pauling also proved himself as a prolific and skilled songwriter. In 1953, Jeffries left the group due to illness and was replaced by Tanner's younger brother, Eugene, who had a higher, smoother voice, and this addition expanded the group's range of material. Jeffries later returned to the group as road manager and as vocalist on occasional recordings.

In late 1953 the group switched labels to one of the top dogs in the R&B market, King Records in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Throughout the remainder of the 1950s, the "5" Royales recorded one great record after another for King, and the group displayed amazing versatility in recording blues, sweet pop, rock'n'roll and proto-

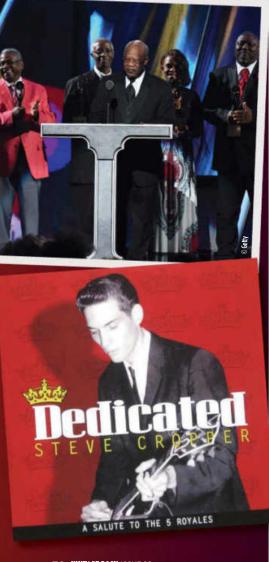


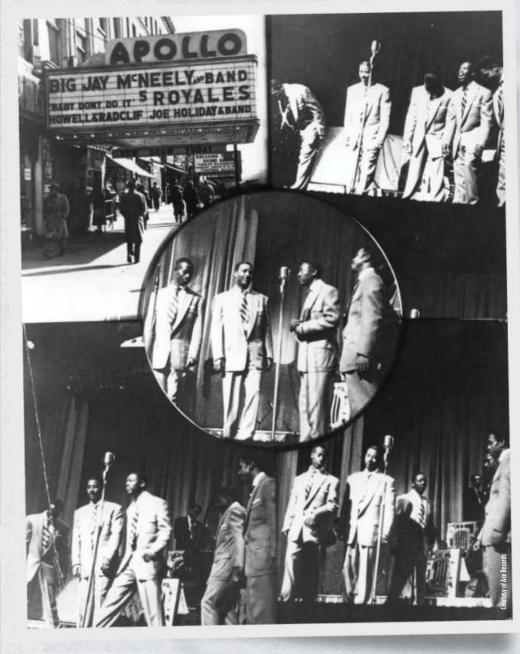


### **FAME AT LAST**

It took over 60 years from their debut, but the "5" Royales finally made it to the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame...

At the 30th annual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony on April 18th 2015, the "5" Royales were finally inducted in the 'Early Influence' category — a suggestion that powers that be were aware of their oversight. Booker T & the MG's guitarist Steve Cropper curated the *Dedicated* album, an all-star tribute to the group that was released in 2011, and he was the ideal candidate to induct the group at the ceremony, saying: 'they're long overdue for this kind of worldwide acclaim' — an understatement if ever there was one. It was left to family members of the original five-piece (the late John Tanner, Eugene Tanner, Lowman Pauling, Jimmy Moore and Obadiah Carter), to accept the award on their behalf. Better late than never...





soul records. Despite the high quality of their recordings, however, they couldn't duplicate the chart success at Apollo. As with many R&B artists who contributed to the creation of the rock'n'roll sound, the "5" Royales found difficulty in appealing to the new teenage market. Between 1955 and 1960, the group scored only two chart hits. *Tears Of Joy* rose to #9 R&B in July 1957 and two months later *Think* also made it to #9 R&B and crossed over to #66 pop.

Despite the lack of chart hits, the "5" Royales were steady sellers for the label and remained a popular live attraction. Released in June 1960, *The Five Royales* was the third and final 'original' album for King (subsequent King LPs were repackages of material from the first three albums). Like its two predecessors, the album was a collection of singles, wrapped up in King's trademark chintzybut-charming packaging, featuring the photo-cartoon design style used on many King LPs. As was typical for King's art production on albums, the cover was a

slapdash effort. The photo heads were cut from an old Apollo-era publicity photo featuring Otto Jeffries instead of Eugene Tanner, and the incorrect, spelled-out version of the group's name was used on the front cover, while the proper numerical version ("5" Royales) was used on the back cover, spine and record label.

As wacky and tacky as King's packaging, the music within was all class. The album opens with the March 1959 single, I Know It's Hard But It's Fair, which lays down an irresistible groove backing the interplay between Johnny Tanner's raspy lead vocals and Jimmy Moore's falsetto 'doo-woo's'. Although the single failed to hit nationally, it later became a regional favorite for shag dancers in the Carolina beach music scene. The B-side of the same single follows, switching to a gentler sound with Eugene Tanner taking the lead on the smooth love ballad, Miracle Of Love. The song also showcases the piano playing of fellow North Carolinian and King session man Royal Abbit.



Track 3 brings another 1959 single side, with My Sugar Sugar. This time the rougher-voiced Johnny Tanner delivers sweet praises in a bouncy tune dedicated to the charms of a confectionary lass. The elder Tanner brother also handles the lead on the slow love ballad When You Walked Through That Door. As close to conventional doo-wop as the "5" Royales ever came, the song was written by Otis Blackwell (Fever, Don't Be Cruel, All Shook Up and Great Balls Of Fire) under the name 'John Davenport' because of the contractual obligations he had with Jay-Dee Records. It's one of several tracks that the "5" Royales recorded in 1955 and 1956 at a series of sessions held at Beltone Studios in New York City, where they had recorded their hits for Apollo.

Reaching even further into the past, the fifth track of side one, *School Girl* casts the net back to the group's third session for King records, held in December 1954. Another great Lowman Pauling composition, it drew inspiration from the blues standard *Good Morning Little* 

School Girl. Pauling transfers the theme to a loping rhythm line that builds tension on its choruses through the sly and clever group interrogation of lead singer Johnny Tanner. The record would later become a favourite of the beach music fans.

Side one closes with *Get Something Out of It*, another track from the New York Beltone sessions, this time from June 1956. The lead spotlight shifts back to Eugene as he delivers an astounding proto-soul performance, drawing heavily on his gospel roots for a healthy portion of rhythm and blues philosophising.

Flipping over to side two brings the listener back to King Studios in Cincinnati, Ohio for both sides of the July 1959 single. With a beautiful lead from Eugene Tanner, *Tell Me You Care* demonstrates how the "5" Royales were at the forefront of the transformation of R&B into soul. The B-side of the same single, *Wonder Where Your Love Has Gone*, throws the lead back to Johnny. This two-fisted soul workout includes the 'pow' of Lowman Pauling's blues-

inflected guitar fills and the 'bam' from the acapella delivery of the song's title on the last line of the chorus.

Continuing with 1959 vintage tracks, It Hurts Inside was originally released in October of that year as the flip side of My Sugar Sugar. Although Johnny Tanner usually handled the vocals on rockin' numbers, little brother Eugene takes the lead on this down and dirty bluessoul shakedown. The interplay between Eugene's vocals and Lowman Pauling's intense guitar licks amply demonstrates how the "5" Royales were able to hold their own against label mates James Brown and the Famous Flames.

Mine Forevermore, from the 1956 New York sessions, features the guitar of ace session man Mickey Baker. Instead of tearing loose, Baker provides perfect blues fills throughout the song and then lays down a foundation for the amazing sax duel in the break between tenor player Lowell 'Count' Hastings and baritone honker Danny Bank.



#### LISTEN UP! The "5" Royales The Five Royales (King, 1960)

Side A
I Know It's Hard But It's Fair
Miracle Of Love
My Sugar Sugar
When You Walked Through The Door
School Girl
Get Something Out Of It

Side B
Tell Me You Care
Wonder Where Your Love Has Gone
It Hurts Inside
Mine Forevermore
One Mistake
Women About To Make Me Go Crazy





## Their dynamic live performances inspired a new generation of soul singers and shouters

Next up is *One Mistake*, the flip side of *School Girl* from side one. Recorded at the same November 1954 King Studios session as its distaff partner, it's a great blues workout that features tasty tinkling piano from Sonny Thompson.

Bringing the curtain down on this platter of classic rhythm, blues and soul is yet another cut from the New York sessions, highlighting the powerful partnership of the "5" Royales and Mickey Baker. Women About to Make Me Go Crazy, recorded in May 1955, highlights the group in all its glory. Lowman Pauling's clever and eloquent lyrics on the intoxicating effect of the fairer sex are brought to life through a changing line-up of lead vocals. Johnny Tanner handles the first verse, Pauling the second, and Eugene brings it home. Throw in fantastic guitar fills from Baker and a hot sax solo from Willis 'Gator' Jackson and it's a recipe for R&B nirvana.

In early 1960, just before the release of *The Five Royales*, the group filed a lawsuit against King and moved on to the smaller Memphis-based Home Of The Blues Records. For the next few years they bounced from label to label, chasing the elusive hit until they disbanded in 1965. During that time, others artists scored big with versions of "5" Royales

songs — *Dedicated (To The One I Love)* by both The Shirelles and The Mamas & The Papas, *Think* by James Brown, and *Tell The Truth* by Ray Charles.

On 26 December 1973, Lowman Pauling was working as a janitor at a New York synagogue when he died of an apparent seizure at the age of 46. In the decades that followed, his fellow Royales joined him in the great beyond, but their legacy was not forgotten. Their dynamic live performances inspired a new generation of soul singers and shouters, and Lowman Pauling's guitar work influenced many young players, most notably Steve Cropper, who gained fame as the house guitarist for Stax Records and as a member of Booker T & The MG's.

In 2011, Steve Cropper paid tribute to his inspiration with the album *Dedicated:* A Salute to the "5" Royales. A 5CD box set, Soul & Swagger: The Complete "5" Royales, was released in 2014 by Rock Beat Records, and in 2015 Sundazed Music reissued the group's third King LP in all its remastered vinyl glory. The revived interest and awareness that the "5" Royales has garnered in recent years surely played a part in their long overdue induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2015 — a well-deserved tribute to a group that made the rhythm roll. ★

## Tom McCullough on the "5" Royales

Having annotated all 141 tracks on the *Soul & Swagger, The Complete "5" Royales* 5CD box set, Tom McCulloch knows every detail of the North Carolina group's recording career from 1951 to 1967. *Vintage Rock* asked him about his fascination with the band, his memories of meeting the men themselves, and his favourite tracks from their last-ever King release...

orth Carolina native and record collector Tom McCullough has been an ardent fan of the "5" Royales ever since discovering their work in the 1970s. He's devoted many years to preserving the group's legacy, and he co-produced the box set *Soul & Swagger: The Complete "5" Royales* for RockBeat Records in 2014.

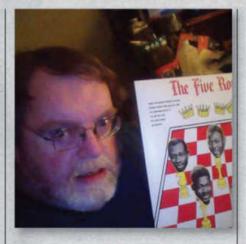
#### How did you first become a fan of the "5" Royales?

In the early '70s, I was a voracious reader of anything to do with the early period of rock'n'roll. In those days, my tastes ran toward rockabilly and frantic rock'n'roll rather than blues and R&B, but over time, I gravitated to doo-wop vocal groups and R&B solo artists.

I read about the recordings of the "5" Royales, who were based out of Winston-Salem, just a few miles from where I live. Eventually I picked up several extremely worn "5" Royales 78's at a flea market, but those only whetted my appetite for more. In those days, reissue LP's of the "5" Royales were scarce as hen's teeth. The first album I found was the LP *Down Home With The Five Royales* (a 1978 bootleg reissue) which contained 14 of their Apollo sides.

#### Did you ever get to meet any of the band members in person?

I eventually got to interview four of the King-era line-up of the "5" Royales — Johnny and Eugene Tanner, Jimmy Moore, and Obadiah Carter. Lowman Pauling had already passed away by that time, but I met his wife and son, as well as Pauling's cousin, Windsor King [lead singer of The Cashmeres and a solo R&B star in his own right]. Their long-term road manager and Apollo-era performing member Otto Jeffries had also already passed away, but his relatives sold me several records from his personal collection. I was also honoured when



John Tanner's family asked me to deliver a eulogy at his funeral in 2005.

#### What can you tell us about the 'chessboard' album of 1960?

That album was released in June 1960 after the group was no longer actively recording for the King label. The last King session took place in Miami Beach, Florida in February 1960, but the single from that session remained in the can until June that same year. King probably wanted to get the last single and the 'new' album on the market before the "5" Royales' first single for Home Of The Blues hit the street.

Like many King LPs, the selection and programming of tracks is somewhat carelessly done in regards to chronological and thematic order, but thanks to the nearly uniform high quality of "5" Royales' recordings, it's still a very enjoyable album. A lesser group would probably not have fared nearly as well under these circumstances.

#### What are your favourite songs from the album?

I Know It's Hard But It's Fair is a good one. It's very well produced and should have been even a bigger hit than it was. I also like School Girl a whole lot. It's always been one of my favourites. WRDX

in Salisbury, North Carolina was on the air in the late '80s playing nothing but beach music, and they played it a lot.

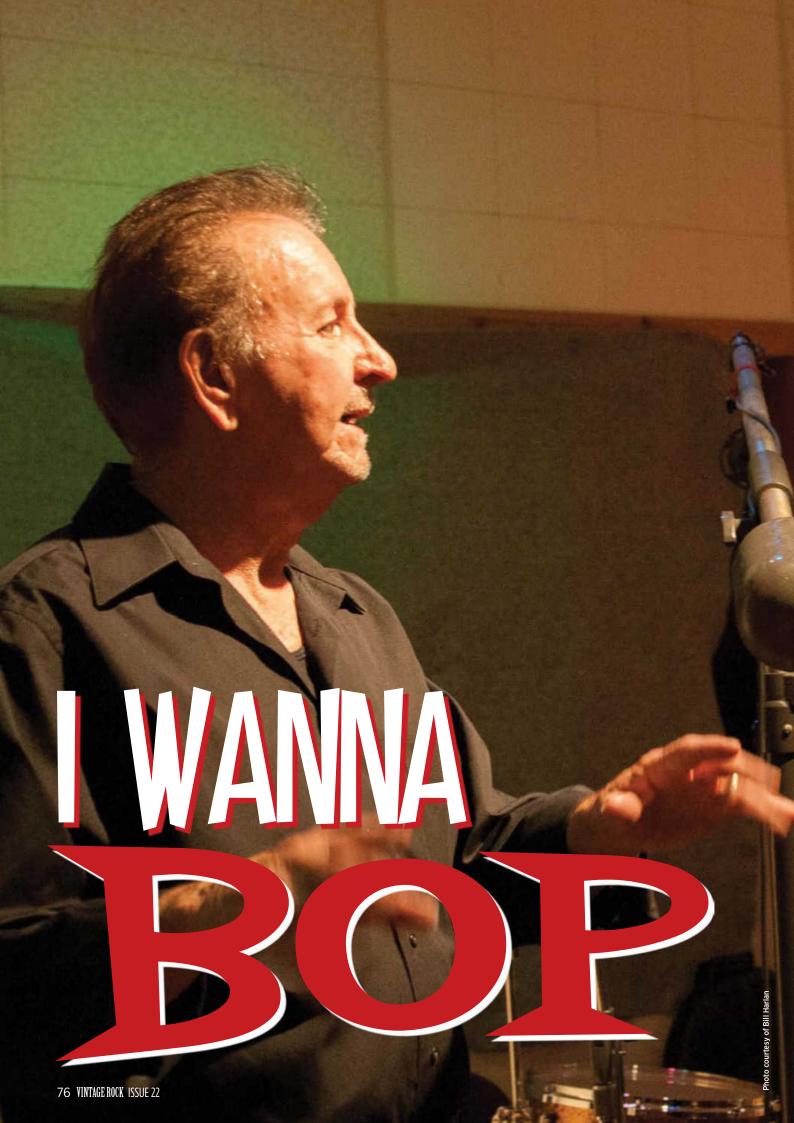
Get Something Out Of It is really great, especially for what was considered to be the B-side. Tell Me You Care is another good one. It's actually a cover of a 1954 Lamplighters tune with a guitar riff that they stole, of all places, from Paul Anka's Lonely Boy. I think they were trying to freshen up the old tune, but it's the last thing you would expect to hear on a "5" Royales record. I think maybe Ralph Bass, who was producing them at King by that point, probably threw it in.

It Hurts Inside is a killer. I think it's one of Eugene Tanner's best leads. That song has everything — a great lead, a strong sax break, and Royal Abbit on piano. Royal was a great piano player and is often overlooked by "5" Royales fans. He had a long history with the group and played on most of their Cincinnati sessions. There was even an extended period when Johnny Tanner was sick and Royal filled in for him singing the leads on tour.

Women About To Make Me Go Crazy is a great one to close the album. Any of the tunes where they were on the edge of being lascivious are great, they really excelled at those. The use of three different leads really makes that song.

#### What do you think distinguished the "5" Royales from the other vocal groups of the same time period?

I think their biggest asset was Lowman Pauling, who was a very talented and prolific songwriter. Very few groups had a self-contained composition unit like he was. He not only wrote for the "5" Royales, but he also wrote for the Checkers and many other artists –and he was a virtuoso guitar player too. As well as that, they had a variety of quality vocalists available. Every member of the group was very talented. It was an embarrassment of riches.





## AFTER 57 YEARS, **BILL HARLAN** RETURNED TO WHERE THE BOPPIN' FIRST BEGAN IN NASHVILLE'S HISTORIC RCA STUDIO B. **RANDY FOX** CATCHES UP WITH THE WESTERN KENTUCKY ROCKABILLY MAN...

CA Studio B on Music Row in Nashville. Tennessee has been the birthplace of classic records from Elvis Presley, the Everly Brothers, Janis Martin, Chet Atkins, Roy Orbison and countless others. Opening in 1957, it was designed as a state-of-the-art studio, and paid host to thousands of recording sessions over the next two decades. In 1977 it became a tourist attraction administered by the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and has served as a teaching studio for nearby Belmont University. Today, its checkerboard floors, acoustic tile-covered walls and mid-century décor seem almost untouched by the decades of changes and all the 'progress' that has taken place outside its walls.

On a recent, chilly December evening in Nashville, Bill Harlan, his band and a group of close friends gathered at Studio B. As the band tuned up, Harlan met with a quartet of Nashville back-up singers, giving them the lyrics of his songs and making suggestions as they worked out the arrangements for their parts on the spot – the way it was done on so

many classic Nashville sessions. With everything ready, the studio engineer announced "roll tape" over the talk back speaker, and Bill Harlan began cutting his newest record, in the same spot where he recorded the rockabilly classic *I Wanna Bop* over half a century ago.

Bill Harlan's journey to one of Nashville's most famous studios began in the rolling hills of Muhlenberg County, Kentucky. Born on 24 March 1937 in the small coalmining community of Martwick, Harlan grew up surrounded by music. "I can't remember a time when I wasn't singing," Harlan says. "My dad was a coal miner, but he and all of his family played music of some sort.

"We lived in Martwick until the mines worked out there and then we moved to Cleaton [about eight miles away]. I used to get up with my dad before he'd go to work in the morning, and we'd listen to country music on WSM out of Nashville. I was about four or five when my dad took a ukulele and put some guitar strings on it for me to play. I could sing *Walking the Floor Over You* all the way through."

Music was a very important part of the coalmining settlements of Western Kentucky. The style of guitar playing known as 'Muhlenberg County thumbpicking' developed in towns like Cleaton and Drakesboro, and Muhlenberg County musicians – Merle Travis, James 'Spider' Rich, Mose Rager and Ike Everly – gained fame with their lightning-fast picking on country music radio shows and recordings. Bill Harlan grew up hearing the names of these skilled guitarists, and it wasn't long before he met one of them in person.

"I was about 12 years old when I met the Everly Brothers," Harlan recalls. "Their parents, Ike and Margaret,

I was about 12 when I met the Everly Brothers. After we met, we spent every summer together. We were just kids"

#### Listen up



#### I Wanna Bop on That'll Flat Git It! Vol. 2

**BEAR FAMILY RECORDS** 

This stonking collection of rockabilly from the vaults of Decca Records features plenty to get excited about including Johnny Carroll, Jackie Lee Cochran, Roy Hall and of course Harlan's *I Wanna Bop* 



#### School House Rock on That'll Flat Git It! Vol. 6

BEAR FAMILY RECORDS

More sizzling sides from the Decca vaults in the sixth (!) of the series including top material from Don Woody, Arlie Duff, Roy Hall, Barbera Allen, Eddie Fontaine... and another scorcher from Billy!



#### Teen Jean Jive on The Drugstore's Rockin' Vol. 1

BEAR FAMILY RECORDS

Aside from Harlan's top tune, herein lies some rare fare including hits from Sue Thompson, John D Loudermilk and The Four Preps, and classics from Barbara Evans, Jackie DeShannon and more



#### This Lonely Man on The Drugstore's Rockin' Vol. 2 BEAR FAMILY RECORDS

Plenty to get excited about on the second volume of *The Drugstore's Rockin'*, and Billy Harlan's *This Lonely Man* is one of the best. Other tips include Sonny James' previously unissued cut *Let's Make Up* and Dorsey Burnette's *Circle Rock* 



were from Cleaton and they would come home every summer to spend time with their relatives. At that time, my friend Tommy Payne and I were singing together as a duet. We were rehearsing close to where Don and Phil's uncle lived. Ike and Phil came over to meet us, and we met Don a little later."

Even though the Everly Brothers were still several years away from rock'n'roll stardom, they were already local celebrities because of their performances on radio stations in Chicago and Shenandoah, Iowa. For those summers in Cleaton, Don and Phil were just part of the gang. "After we met, we spent every summer together," Harlan says. "I can't even remember when we slept. We were just kids playing during the day and staying out late at night.

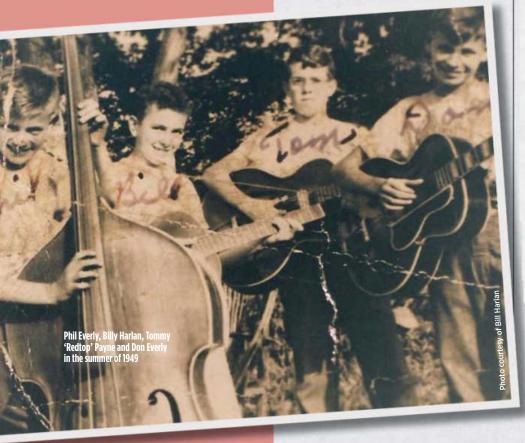
We had a big bass fiddle that we carried all over the place. Don, Phil, Tommy and I would play shows together."

In 1954, Harlan met another country music singer who helped bring him fully into the music business. Dave Rich was a Muhlenberg County teenager with dreams of hillbilly stardom. By the age of 14 Rich was playing with his older brother, James 'Spider' Rich, in the local band The Bar-X Cowboys. Two years later, Dave Rich began hosting his own 15-minute radio show on WRUS in nearby Russellville, Kentucky, and Bill Harlan soon joined him.

"I was 16 when I got my own show on WRUS," Harlan says. "I was on the air every day, Monday through Friday at 4pm, and Dave had the show immediately after mine. There was a musician and DJ at the station named Curly Thomas and he hired Dave for his band. They started playing dances at the Russellville Armory, and sometimes I would sit in and play bass. When Curly left Russellville, Dave took his job as DJ. Then Dave left, and I became the afternoon DJ. I only made \$15 a week and the bus from Cleaton to Russellville and back cost me \$10 a week, but I was doing what I wanted to do."

Harlan eventually joined Dave Rich's band The Melody Ranch Hands, which also featured Muhlenberg County guitar ace Royce Morgan. The group played local dances, ice cream suppers and promotional events for local businesses. The band also frequently made the 30-mile trip north to Owensboro, Kentucky to play in honky tonks and nightclubs where the underage members of the band lied about their ages.

Harlan's friendship with Rich also led to an encounter that would pay off big in a few years. "Hawkshaw Hawkins and Jean Shepard had been on tour





## "When I took the job with Jim Reeves I wasn't thinking about a singing career, but I got to thinking about how I wanted to be the star"

up north," Harlan says. "They were heading back to Nashville and the bus broke down in Central City, Kentucky. It was going to take a few days to get it fixed. Buddy Killen was playing bass for Hawkshaw, and he needed to get back to Nashville that night. He called Dave to see if he could get a ride to Nashville. Dave couldn't go, but he loaned me his '55 Chrysler, and I drove Buddy to Nashville. We really hit it off and stayed friends after that."

In September 1955, Dave Rich signed with RCA Records and cut his first session at the RCA's McGavock Street studio in Nashville (in use before Studio B opened in 1957) with Harlan on bass. Rich soon moved to Nashville, and with the Everlys also living in the Music City, Harlan became a frequent visitor.

"I'd put my toothbrush in my pocket and hitchhike to Nashville," he says. "Ike and Margaret said I was always welcome, so I'd spend a week at a time. Fortunately, I was the same size as Don so I could always borrow clothes from him."

Through 1956, Harlan continued to play with Dave Rich on the road. He also began to turn his talents to songwriting, and his friendship with Buddy Killen proved profitable. In addition to his bass playing, Killen worked for Tree Publishing in Nashville, pitching songs to producers and singers. In October 1956, Hawkshaw Hawkins recorded one of Harlan's compositions, *My Fate Is In Your Hand*, for RCA.

Despite these early successes, Harlan soon had other responsibilities weighing on his mind. "I got married when I was 19 years old," Harlan says. "I was still playing with Dave, but I felt like I needed to get a regular job. I moved to Chicago and got a job pumping gas. I was there about three weeks when I got a call from Dave that Jim Reeves needed a bass player. I told Dave, 'I'll be on the midnight bus."

Harlan got the job, and his former bandmate Royce Morgan soon joined him in Reeves' band, The Wagonmasters. Through 1957 and into 1958, Harlan crisscrossed the US with Reeves and even visited Germany on a USO tour lasting 22 days where he backed stars Janis Martin, the Browns, Del Wood and Hank Locklin. Harlan also spent time on the road with country duo The Wilburn Brothers in between tours with Reeves.

It was high cotton for any hillbilly musician, but Harlan found that he wanted more of the spotlight. "When I took the job with Jim I wasn't thinking about a singing career. Tommy Hill was also in the band, and we would sing a few songs at the start of every show to warm up the audience. Eventually I got to thinking about how much I liked to sing and how I wanted to be the star." That desire to take centre stage soon combined a tardy but powerful case of rockabilly fever.

"I hadn't cared for Elvis at first," Harlan says. "I just didn't think he was going to last when I first heard him, but seeing the movie *Jailhouse Rock* really turned me on to rock'n'roll. It inspired me to write *School House Rock*. It was pretty much about where I went to school. There was a restaurant called the Cardinal Café right across the street from Drakesboro High School. Since the school didn't have air conditioning, we would open the windows and you could hear the music coming from the Cardinal Café's jukebox and I just put that into the song."

With the song in hand, Harlan took it to Buddy Killen who thought it was the perfect tune for Harlan's solo

inswic

debut. Harlan and Royce

Morgan quickly wrote
a second rocker, I

Wanna Bop, and
Killen booked
time at RCA
Studio B. After
cutting the two
sides, Killen
sold the masters
to Brunswick
Records.

Released in May 1958, the single by 'Billy' Harlan received a positive review in Billboard, but sales never took off. Harlan remembers eventually getting a royalty statement for around 600 copies sold. Although he didn't get a hit the first time at bat, Harlan kept on swinging.

"I kept writing for Tree Publishing," he says. "I was writing a lot of songs with Don and Phil in mind, hoping they would record one of them. I wrote *This Lonely Man*, but Buddy Killen played it for Chet Atkins and he really liked it. Out of the clear blue sky he offered me a contract

of shows with Jim Reeves.

When I got

back, I called Chet and he told me he wasn't going to release the record. I was crushed. It turned out that while I was in Nevada, they had sent the contract to my address in Central City, so I never signed it. Because of that, RCA was under no obligation to release it, and Chet had moved on to something else while I was away. I probably cried when I found out."

#### We cut two songs in Studio B... This Lonely Man with Chet, and Teen Jean Jive with Don Everly. I thought, This is it. I'm on my way"

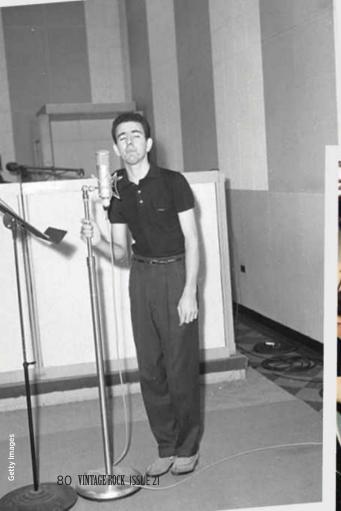
with RCA. We cut two songs in Studio B – *This Lonely Man* with Chet on guitar and *Teen Jean Jive* with Don Everly playing the Bo Diddley riff on it. I really thought, 'This is it. I'm on my way.'"

The excitement he felt was understandable, but Harlan soon found out that two recordings in the can did not equal a fast train to the big time. "Chet kept telling me it needed something else, like we needed to add some backing vocals or more instruments, but I had to leave town to do a month

Harlan's wife and son had gone with him to Nevada and then stayed over in Phoenix, Arizona to visit relatives while he returned to Nashville.

His disappointment was a constant companion on the drive back to Phoenix, and when he got there, his mind was made up. "I called Royce and told him I wasn't coming back," Harlan says. I had a small apartment in Nashville, and I never even sent for my stuff. I was done with the music business."

For the next several years he lived in Arizona and California, pursuing a career as a computer technician. After a divorce, he followed his work to Louisville, Kentucky, where he began playing in a







## "In 2010, I started getting these emails from Tom Ingram wanting me to perform at Viva Las Vegas. I kept wondering why he wanted me, I hadn't performed my rockabilly songs in over 50 years, but he kept emailing and calling." What Harlan didn't know was that "In 2010 I started getting calls from Tom Ingram wanting me to perform at Viva Las Vegas. I kept wondering why he wanted me"

What Harlan didn't know was that the B-side of his sole rockabilly release, *I Wanna Bop*, had become a fave among rockabilly fans, and the sides never released by RCA had been enshrined as classics when they were released by Bear Family Records on the 2002 compilation series *The Drugstore's Rockin'*. It took two years of callings, but Harlan eventually succumbed to Ingram's request and made his official return to rockin' at Viva Las Vegas 2012. He followed that up with an appearance at Rockabilly Rave the next year and at Nashville Boogie in 2015.

2008. With his music career revived on a part-time basis, he didn't think

it could get any better.

With his original recordings enjoying a bigger audience than ever before, Harlan began thinking about a return to the place they were created. That's when he met Justin Croft, the studio manager

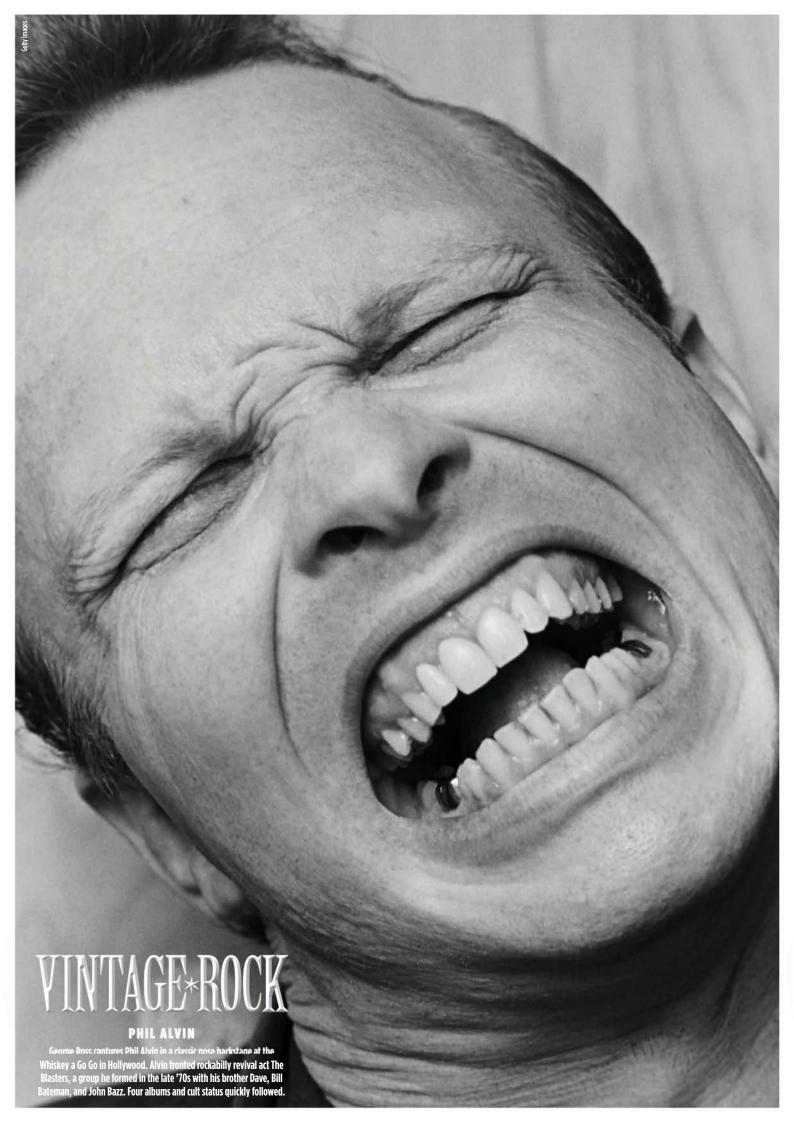
at historic RCA Studio B. "I met Bill by chance," Croft says. "He was in town and came by the studio. We were closed, but I was here and I saw him on the security cameras knocking at all the doors. I've learned that people who are persistent usually have some type of connection to the studio. He came by to visit a few more times, and we began talking about doing a new session in the studio."

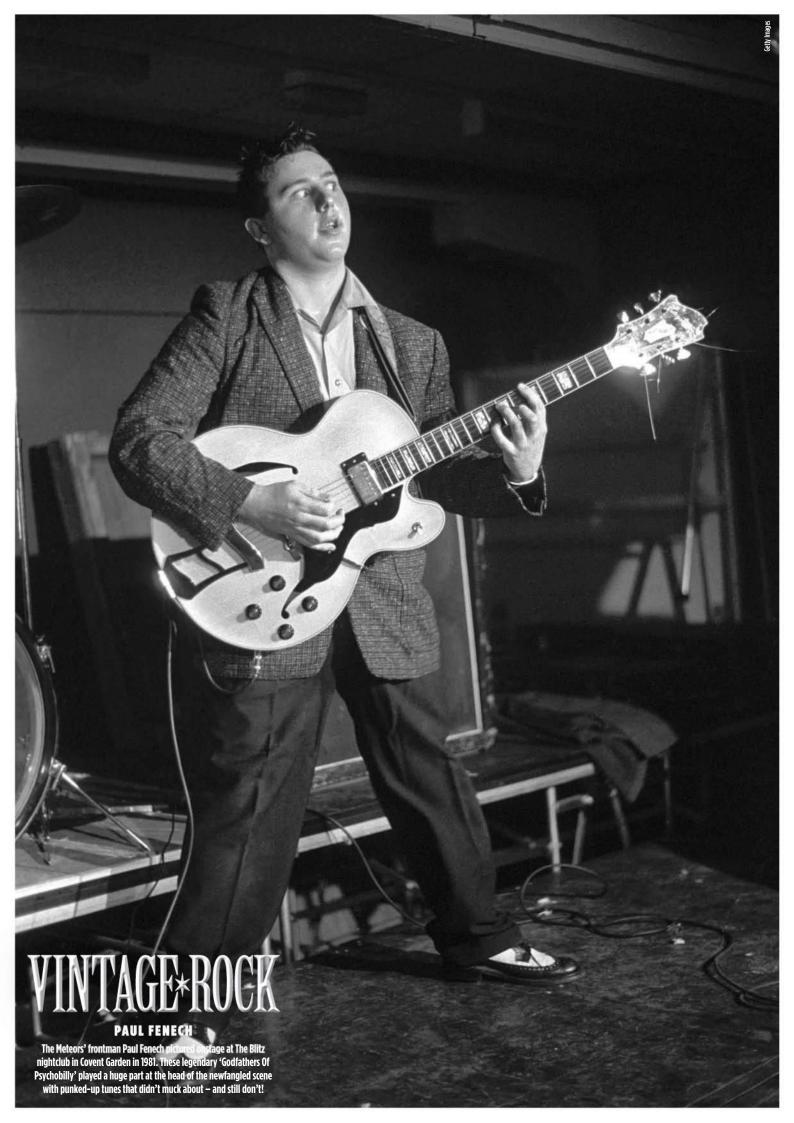
Today, with Studio B enshrined as a tourist attraction, commercial sessions are a rare occurrence. "The last one was with Bobby Bare back in 2012," Croft says, "but I pitched the idea of Bill recording to the committee that oversees the studio, and they totally got it."

With the studio time booked, Muddy Roots Records head Jason Galaz agreed to release the tracks as a set of 45s just in time for Harlan's appearance at the 2016 Nashville Boogie. Harlan gathered a crack team of Muhlenberg County players together, the background singers were hired, and the assembled group was ready to bop, in the very spot where a 21 year old Billy Harlan had done so over 50 years earlier.

It's an historic occasion, and Bill Harlan couldn't be happier. "There's just so much excitement being in this place again," he says. "It's all the more special knowing that hardly anyone else is doing this. It's the best homecoming ever." \*

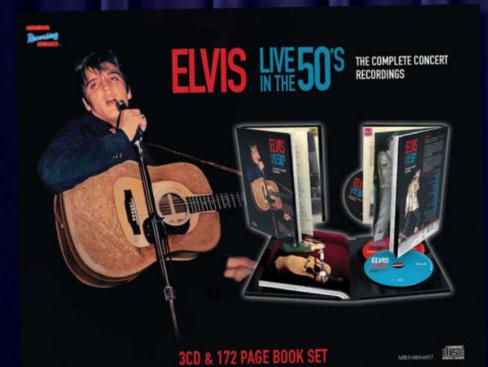






## Competition

WE HAVE A HOST OF PRIZES ON OFFER THIS MONTH WITH A DOUBLE DOSE OF MR ELVIS PRESLEY, A FINE CHUCK BERRY EARLY SINGLES COLLECTION, A CLUTCH OF CRAZY COOL WESTERN STAR SINGLES, AND SOME RARE ROCKABILLY ON VINYL...



#### 1 X ELVIS LIVE IN THE 50S: THE COMPLETE CONCERT RECORDINGS

Thanks to Memphis Recording Service we have one copy of the stellar new *Elvis Live In The 50s* set with all of the King's 1950s live recordings gathered in one place. With 82 lovingly restored and remastered tracks – including some recently uncovered material, rare interviews, and a 172-page booklet with photos and updated notes – it's a goldmine for Presley fans everywhere!

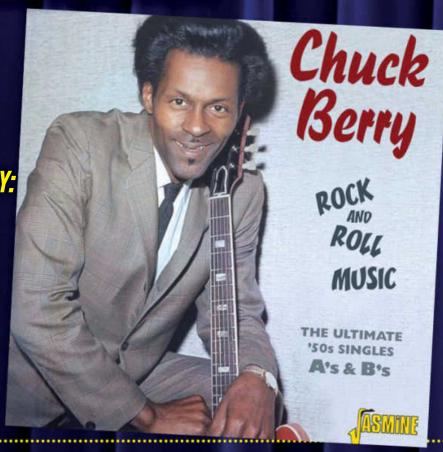
Elvis was born in : Las Vegas \* Tupelo \* New York

## 3 X COPIES OF CHUCK BERRY: ROCK'N'ROLL MUSIC

Those in need of a fresh fix of our cover star should turn their attentions to Jasmine Records' *Chuck Berry: Rock'n'Roll Music*, a CD that compiles the rockin' innovator's first 14 singles – A-sides and B-sides – in the order they were first released. Look no further for a feast of some of the finest rock'n'roll music ever produced!

Chuck Berry's debut single was called:

\* Maybellene \* Lucille \* Carol



### 1 X WESTERN STAR RECORDS VINYL 7" BUNDLE

For this issue of *Vintage Rock*, Western Star Records offers up a great prize for vinyl junkies everywhere. These four delectable 7" waxings – *Next Time* by Jack Rabbit Slim, *Buzz For The Blues* by The Bullets, *Rock Hard Rock Right* by Rusti Steel & The Star Tones, and *Just Dance* by Lew Lewis & The Twilight Trio – are all exceptional servings of 21st century rockabilly and a fine flavour of the label, and they could be yours!

Jack Rabbit Slim's lead singer is called:

\* Levi Dexter \* Bob Butfoy \* Brian Setzer







### 1 X COPIES OF ROCKABILLY RAMPAGE VOLUMES 1 & 2

Two volumes of the finest rare rockabilly are on the menu with Easy Action's *Rockabilly Rampage* series, with gems ranging from Bill Flagg, Curt Jensen and The Louvin Brothers through to Art Wood, Les Vogt, Bill Mack, and many more. Liner notes come from author and writer Dick Porter, all the tracks are restored and remastered, and both volumes are served up on limited edition 180g red vinyl – plus free CD.

Rockabilly was at its height in which decade: \*1920s \*1990s \*1950s

### 5 X COPIES OF VINTAGE ROCK PRESENTS: ELVIS PRESLEY

Last year *Vintage Rock* celebrated the King of Rock'n'Roll with our 132-page *Elvis Collectors Edition*, packed to the brim with features about the Hillbilly Cat, from his music to the women in his life, his record collection, and his sartorial choices. Elsewhere, we take a look at his roots and influences, show off an extremely rare set of photographs from 1956, and discover plenty more besides. We have five copies to give away!

Elvis' manager was called: \* Captain Parker \* Colonel Parker \* Major Parker



To be in with a chance of winning any of the prizes, simply email your answers to **vintagerock@anthem-publishing.com**, or visit **www.vintagerockmag.com/competitions**, click on the relevant question, and fill in your answer and email address. By entering your details you will automatically be added to the *Vintage Rock* email newsletter mailing lists, keeping you informed of news, special offers and promotions via email. Anthem Publishing will not pass on customer email addresses to other companies. You may unsubscribe from these messages at any time. The editor's decision is final.

Closing date: 18th April 2016. Good luck!



WE FOCUS OUR SEARCH ENGINE ON THE BROWN EYED HANDSOME MAN HIMSELF FOR OUR CHUCK BERRY ISSUE BUT ALSO TAKE ON MEMPHIS BLUES, TWANGY COUNTRY, ROLLICKING PIANO BOOGIE, SWEET HARMONY AND SOME FAR-OUT ROCKABILLY CUTS...

BILL DAHL



#### **CHUCK BERRY - AFTER SCHOOL SESSION (CHESS EP 5118)**

As popular as he was straight out of the gate with his 1955 debut *Maybellene* burning up the R&B and pop charts, rarities on the Chess imprint by Chuck Berry are few and far between. His Chess EPs are a notable exception; all of them are relatively hard to secure and worth serious money. The cardboard jacket housing 1957's *After School Session*, his first EP, sports a hip cover by graphic artist Don Bronstein, and it contained three of Berry's best early rockers – *School Day (Ring Ring Goes The Bell), Brown Eyed Handsome Man, Too Much Monkey Business* and the atmospheric after-hours blues *Wee Wee Hours*, the B-side of *Maybellene*. A pristine copy was auctioned for more than \$400 last autumn, another sold for just shy of \$400 in 2012, and several more have changed hands over the last few years in the \$200-300 range.

ertain Chuck Berry EPs are highly desirable commodities nowadays, and that's where our first page is aimed – but we're also finding space to check out the masterfully varied output of Sam Phillips, the lesser-known Bakersfield-style country stylist Wynn Stewart, a fab reissue of a 10" Aladdin LP featuring the irreplaceable Amos Milburn, some beautiful stripped-down Everly Brothers recordings, a crazy-ass rockin' selection from the brain of Mark Lamarr, and some infectious (oh, please), sexy, swinging R&B from Julia Lee...

#### CHUCK BERRY – ROCK AND ROLL MUSIC (CHESS EP 5119)

Chess pressed up two more EPs by its flagship rocker the following year. Rock And Roll Music offered two of Berry's storming hits (the title track and Oh Baby Doll), the moody late-night instrumental Blue Feeling, and the exotic La Jaunda (Espanol). A VG+ copy of the EP with its blue-tinted cover of a dancing throng and a tiny circular photo of Berry moved for \$430 in 2007, though a range of \$150-300 seems to be more common for reasonably clean copies.



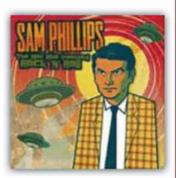
#### CHUCK BERRY - SWEET LITTLE 16 (CHESS EP 5121)

The label placed a red-hued photo of a couple heading into a high school entrance on the cover of Berry's *Sweet Little 16* EP in 1958. It was another mixed bag, the title item and an equally relentless *Reelin' And Rockin'* joined in its grooves by two of Chuck's finest instrumentals, the swinging, jazzy *Rockin' At The Philharmonic* and a slashing *Guitar Boogie*. Top price for a mint-minus copy with its cover in the same shape was a little less than \$350, but highly acceptable copies complete with their cardboard jackets can be



#### VARIOUS ARTISTS — SAM PHILLIPS: THE MAN WHO INVENTED ROCK'N'ROLL

Conceived by author Peter Guralnick as a 45-song companion to his acclaimed biography of Sun founder Sam Phillips, Yep Roc's expansive three-album set strikes a revealing cross-balance between seminal rockers by Elvis, Jerry Lee, Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison, Billy Riley, and Johnny Cash that define the mid-'50s Sun sound with the cottonpatch blues that Sam loved so much. Howlin' Wolf, BB King, Joe Hill Louis, and Rosco Gordon recorded tracks at Phillips' Memphis Recording Service, while Sun triumphed with Little



Junior Parker, Rufus Thomas, Doctor Ross, Jimmy and Walter and Billy 'The Kid' Emerson. Sprinkle in The Prisonaires' Just Walkin' In The Rain and Howard Seratt's country gem Troublesome Waters and you have a pretty fair idea of Phillips' expansive vision.

#### THE EVERLY BROTHERS — THE SONGS OF THE EVERLY BROTHERS

Not only did the Everly Brothers embrace major rock and roll stardom during the music's initial rise, they were also uncommonly talented songwriters, not just for their own use but for other countryoriented singers as well. Sundazed have unearthed 36 of their original publishing demos from the late '50s and early '60s and spread them across two LPs, many of them spotlighting the achingly pure vocal harmonies of Don and Phil with only their acoustic guitars for an instrumental backdrop. Some titles - When Will I Be Loved,



Should We Tell Him, Since You Broke My Heart – were soon cut by the duo with Nashville's A-Team for Archie Bleyer's Cadence Records, while others probably don't exist in any other form but these wonderfully sparse demos.

#### WYNN STEWART — THE VERY BEST OF WYNN STEWART 1958–1962

One of the unsung heroes of the Bakersfield country sound and a formative influence on Buck Owens and Merle Haggard, Missouri-born Wynn Stewart made a lot of his best sides for Joe Johnson's LA-based Challenge label between 1958 and 1962. Varese Sarabande transfers its 18-song Stewart CD to vinyl on April 1, and it's a welcome sight indeed. Stewart was a staunch traditionalist whose Wishful Thinking and Playboy are glorious examples of West Coast country at its uncompromising twang-laden best (Buck Owens



covered his Harlan Howardpenned Above And Beyond [The Call Of Love] and ended up with the hit). Stewart also dabbled in rockabilly when he first signed with the label, doing a very convincing job on a self-penned song entitled Come On.

#### VARIOUS ARTISTS — WILD STREAK ROCK'N'ROLL VOLUME 2

Compiled by Mark Lamarr, Vee-Tone's 18-song rockabilly feast follows the same format as its wildhair predecessor. The set ranges from fairly well-known rockers by Ronnie Self (You're So Right For Me), Jimmy Dee & The Offbeats (Here I Come), Andy Anderson (You Shake Me Up), and Ronnie Pearson (Hot Shot) to obscurities by Phil Cay and The Bluenotes, Terry & The Pirates, the Blue Echoes, Ronnie Gill and the Pastel Keys, Billy Taylor and The Tear Drops, and the Ole Miss Downbeats.



#### AMOS MILBURN - ROCKIN' THE BOOGIE

Very few postwar blues pianists pounded out raucous boogies with the ferocity of Texas native Amos Milburn. His extended string of R&B smashes for LA-based Aladdin Records were direct precursors to the advent of rock and roll, as Bear Family's reproduction of Aladdin's 10" *Rockin' The Boogie*, out April 29, vividly underscores. Issued in '52 when the smaller LP was the norm, every one of the eight selections is a hellacious

boogie, his vocals and the romping band (saxist Maxwell Davis was often involved) just as spirited. *Chicken Shack Boogie* and *Rooming House Boogie* were R&B chart-toppers in 1948 and '49, *Sax Shack Boogie* was a substantial hit, and his piledriving *Down The Road Apiece* is enough to knock down the walls of any jumping chicken shack.



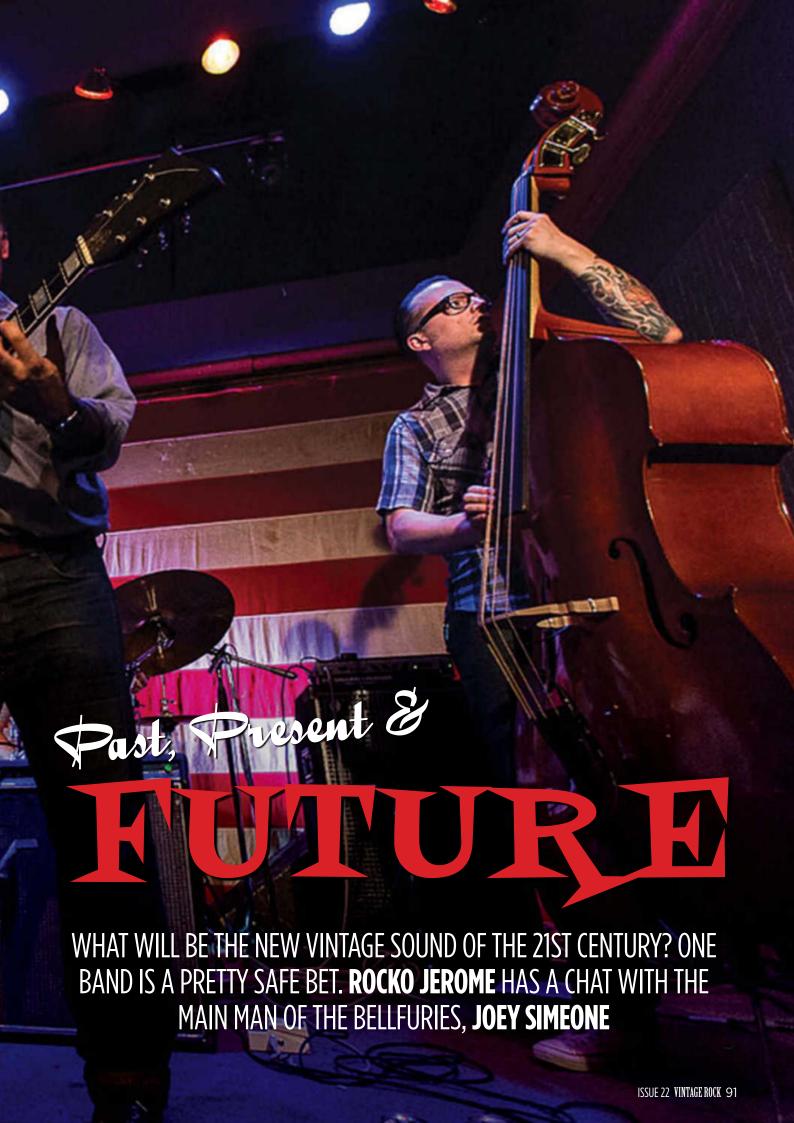
#### JULIA LEE – PARTY TIME

Bawdy and bold, Julia Lee delivered a slew of upbeat double-entendre blues with a wink and a sly smile during her lengthy postwar stay at Capitol Records. Her rock-solid piano beautifully complemented her assured vocals, and her small combos inevitably knew how to swing. Capitol assembled the 10" LP Party Time in the early 1950s; Bear Family reissues it verbatim on March 31 with its eight original selections intact. I Didn't Like It The First Time, You Ain't Got It No More, Snatch And Grab It, and King



Size Papa (the latter pair paced the R&B hit parade in 1947 and '48) were hilarious and lascivious but never smutty. This marvellous little LP no doubt enlivened many a house party back in the day.







funny thing about the bands of the rock'n'roll revival - or rockabilly revival, or roots rock, or modern scene, or whatever we want to call new groups making new songs that sound like old songs: they often sound like they're following a set of unwritten rules. Where the '50s trailblazers were far from purists, picking out what they liked from anywhere on the radio dial to add to the sounds they built, new groups often fall into a stricter groove. Not to necessarily cast this as a negative, but their influence is usually in a straight line back in time to no later than 1963, as if the whole show effectively ended when Kennedy exited stage right and before The Beatles entered stage left.

Not so with The Bellfuries. "The anti-Beatles stance that many rockabillies take was always odd to me," says frontman, guitarist and songwriter Joey Simeone. "For God's sake, pick on somebody else! The Beatles came first for me. I was born in '71, so when I began to get into music at three or four years old, the 'reunite the Beatles' thing was still in full

#### "A couldn't care less about genres. The stuff that influences us is vast and random - Slayer to Dion"

swing. I don't see much of a distinction, at least not until mid-period Beatles, when the psychedelic elements started to show. It's still guitar-driven rock'n'roll to me. When I listen to *I Saw Her Standing There* and *Jailhouse Rock*, they both kick me in the ass!"

Music seemed to be Joey's destiny.

"When I was growing up, I knew I was more passionate about music than any kid my age – or at least it seemed that way," he reflects. "I had other hobbies and interests, but music has dominated my life from as early as I can remember. I couldn't care less about genres... play me a song with a strong melody or a cool chord progression, and I'll probably dig it.

"The list of stuff that influences us is vast and random, from Slayer to Dion. During the time we recorded our first album I was mainly listening to old country and was obsessed with Sam Cooke. I was meeting people – many of whom became lifelong friends or bandmates – who hipped me to obscure country records that completely blew me away. It was such an exciting time for me. We listened to a lot of Black Sabbath in the van, and Mike brought *Dark Side Of The Moon* on for the tour."

Mike is lead guitarist Mike Molnar, who joins Joey along with Jeff Seaver on upright and electric bass, and drummer Chris Sensat. The band hails from Austin, Texas: that's a big town for music, and with plenty of competition, only the strong survive, but The Bellfuries have done just that, with a career that's grown long. The band's first album was 2001's *Just Plain Lonesome*, which made quite an impression on the American rockabilly scene at a time when new

blood was much needed, and they gave a standout performance at a legendary week-long event in Green Bay the following year. Held at the sprawling Oneida casino, the first Rockin' Fifties Fest felt like a final big bash for many originals, with an unbelievable line-up of over 100 stellar acts from all over the world. The show spotlighted greats like Ronnie Dawson, Billy Lee Riley, and Paul Burlison toward the ends of their lives, as well as giving a place for a return to rare form for newer favourites like High Noon - who reunited for a oneoff - and Big Sandy, who brought the Fly Rite Trio back together again specially for the event.

The Bellfuries were the fresh faces, and they hit it like heroes that day. Although their 'junior' status demanded that they occupy the smallest of several stages, the in-crowd knew that where they were playing was the place to be, and renowned guitarman Deke Dickerson filmed their set with a camcorder. They were the next big thing; with literate lyrics, a pop sensibility, and a soul twist, it felt like The Bellfuries were set to take over the world.

Then came a long quiet stretch, which ended with the *Palmyra* album in 2008. It was an unabashed pop record that gave us one of the group's smartest tunes to date, the jangly, catchy *Death Of An Idol*, with lyrics that pointed an accusing finger at a faded rocker: "I first saw you in Jersey /I was a greasy kid fool, you were the king of cool," sang Joey. "You walked in all decked out in red /The beehive-headed gals all turned their heads /Now they don't even know you're dead..."

Who was it about? "Death Of An Idol is basically a composite," says Joey. "The title came to me after two of my favourite bands released records that I was very disappointed with. I said to my buddy,

'Well... that's a death of another idol for me.' I liked the title, so I formulated a story around it."

Joey's lyrics have drawn comparisons to none other than Dylan. "Well, the comparison was a bit of a joke," he avers. "I think that was just a compliment referencing the fact that some Bellfuries songs have lyrics with a bit more substance, at least in comparison to other

He and Joey got along fine. "It was a lot of fun. We butted heads on a few things, but you have to be willing to give up some control when you agree to work with a producer. Jimmy is more style and rhythmic-minded. I'm more interested in melody. I don't care much about style – as long as the song works, I'm happy.

"An unsung hero of the sessions for *Workingman's Bellfuries* is Barrett

#### "For me the wordy stuff holds the same weight as a wop bop a loo bop a lop bam boom"

modern rockabilly songs. There's room for all types, of course. For me the wordy stuff holds the same weight as 'a wop bop a loo bop a lop bam boom.' Really, it's whatever moves ya, baby!"

As the years flew by, Just Plain
Lonesome became such a sought-after
classic that it was re-released with extra
tracks after a very successful Kickstarter
campaign in 2011, buoyed in part by
JD McPherson's spirited cover of Your
Love (All That I'm Missing), a killer
cut that served as strong a centrepiece
on McPherson's hit record, Signs And
Signifiers, as it had on the Bellfuries'
own previous platter. It made sense that
Jimmy Sutton – McPherson's bassist,
producer, and the driving force behind
Hi-Style Records – would come calling.

Workingman's Bellfuries took months to record, but when it hit the scene in 2015 it was obvious that hard work had paid off. Sutton generally records in a Chicago attic using vintage equipment and techniques, and is well-known for obsessive attention to detail. He gets it right, but he works hard at it, and expects the same from his collaborators.

Walton, who co-engineered [along with Alex Hall] and co-produced all the vocals. Due to a few factors beyond – and within! – our control, we ended up doing all the vocals here in Austin, at my apartment, in my walk-in closet! Barrett set up all the gear and monitored from my living room, while I sang to my girlfriend's shoes, dresses, collared shirts, and winter coats... it was hot as hell in there!"

Part of what smoothed the process was the groundwork Joey had already laid, long before Workingman was fully sketched out. "Most of the song skeletons had been around for quite some time. There are a few that I wished could have made it on the record, but didn't seem to fit, or we couldn't agree on workable arrangements. Loving Arms was the only tune I wrote in the studio - actually in the apartment below the studio – the day before we recorded it. Once the chords, keys, and lyrics are worked out, it's trial and error to see what arrangement works. It's not rocket science, but can be a bit elusive if you aren't in the right headspace or aren't open to the possibilities of where the song can go."

So now, with their slickest record yet,

where does the future for The Bellfuries hold? Joey answers the question succinctly. "More touring, more songs," he laughs. "More whiskey, more beer... and hopefully less poverty." \*

You can grab all The Bellfuries' albums past and present, check out their schedule and learn more about them at http://thebellfuries.com







THE BIG O'S 'LOST' ALBUM, THE RETURN OF DION, RUMBLINGS FROM GERMANY, PLENTIFUL COMPILATIONS, ONE HEART-THROB, ONE POP STARLET AND SOME BRAND NEW ROCKABILLY FINERY FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE BIG POND...



Another Round **JIMMY AND THE MUSTANGS** 

Jimmy Haddox has his roots in the southern Californian punk scene but has buried those '80s beginnings to produce music often filed under rockabilly (which sounds like straight rock'n'roll to these ears). The band has a tremendous brass section that rocks like the clappers, and they show huge variety in pace and approach: compare the sparse tribute to Gene Vincent entitled Ready Set Go with the beautiful Her Love Is Gone and the strong opener Roll The Dice and you'll understand why Bruce Springsteen and Robert Plant are fans. JH



**Mv Love For Evermore** THE HILLBILLY MOON EXPLOSION Sonv

This Swiss-based, selfdescribed rockabilly band has made a big noise beyond the Alps thanks principally to the untypical country chugger that gives the title to this 'best of' compilation. English-born Oliver Baroni's throaty vocals add authenticity to the self-penned material and he also shares lead vocals with Emanuela Hutter; the title track is apparently a murder ballad in which, for a change, she kills him. Much of the material is quality pop rather than rockabilly, with consistently high production values and vocals. JH



#### The Lost Album **SWITCHBLADE**

Western Star

They say this is a rockabilly album that managed to stay in the can for 20-plus years, and the cover promises delights within as one member of the quartet - far right - seems a dead ringer for Elvis in April 1960. A generous 19 tracks with some, by now, overplayed covers including Blues Blues Blues, Blue Jeans And A Boy's Shirt and Go Go Go, in cuts shaded by the originals from, respectively, Hayden Thompson, Glen Glenn and Roy Orbison. Mouse Zinn, a household name on lead vocal and guitar, says he is relieved the recordings have finally seen the light of day. JH



In With The Hens

Western Star

THE ROADHOUSE ROOSTERS

The Roosters - otherwise vocalist Jonny Smith, drummer Steve Holley, guitarist James Fenton, second guitarist Jan Rottiers, and double bassist Dave Sholl - are based in Swindon, and they've been round the block a few times, so

their combined experience suggests they know how to do it right. Not only do they record

well, they also write their own material, with tracks like

Straight From The Heart and Chromes'n'Fins garnering radio

airplay. Jonny may lack the look of a leading man, but he's got

the voice, and the band are wise to keep him up front. JH

#### **One Long Saturday Night BR5-49**

**Bear Family** 

Ten years after BR5-49 last played together, Bear Family have unearthed live cuts from Germany recorded just a year after their breakthrough and never previously released. The band played a cross between rockabilly and western swing, and their own originals like Bettie Bettie and Little Ramona (Gone Hillbilly Nuts) blend seamlessly with classics like Gone Gone and Cherokee Boogie. With four more tracks than the companion Bear Family DVD and liner notes from frontman Chuck Mead, this is a worthy reminder of a band much missed. JH



#### Rockin' The Groove

**VARIOUS** 

**Bear Family** 

Beautifully presented and with extensive liner notes from our very own (awardwinning) Bill Dahl, this 35-track R&B wonder covers the output of Danny Kessler's Groove label - a stable for a variety of artists and some priceless wax. Notable are vocal get-up The Du Droppers and the life-loving *That's All I* Need, two rolling blues guitar gaits from Roy Gaines (Hoodoo, Alabama Sue), Bertice Reading's undulating IGotta Know, the exquisite impatience of Zilla Mays' Right Now and Sonny Brooks' effortless Champ Ale. RF



#### Vamos Rockin!

THE LEGENDARY WILD BOB BURGOS AND HIS HOUSEROCKERS

TC

Always solid rock'n'roll from this drumming veteran (Screaming Lord Sutch, Matchbox), who has always made loads of noise - and friends. Many long-term buddies add sleevenotes to this 12-track collection culled from recordings cut over the last three years, and it's all written, sung and produced by Bob. Judging by the title, which translates as Let's Go Rocking, and the track Buenos Aires Is Calling, Bob has rediscovered his Argentinian roots. Great fun and highly danceable throughout. JH



#### What Do You Want? – The Singles Collection 1958–1962

ADAM FAITH
Jasmine

Despite the glitzy moniker given him by BBC producer Jack Good and several 6.5 Special appearances, Faith's early instalments on HMV present here – bombed. Spots on Drumbeat and new management led to a John Barry-arranged single on Top Rank, Ah, Poor Little Baby, and a film role on Beat Girl, and his fortunes turned. 1959's What Do You Want? was mauled by critics but went to #1. This mix takes us through the whole affair up until '62, plus bonus Beat Girl LP cuts. RF



#### Rockin' With Jack Rabbit Slim

**JACK RABBIT SLIM** 

**Western Star** 

If you're a fan of JRS rockabilly stylings, best buy two copies of this 10" gold vinyl six-track mini album one to play, and one to hang on the wall. We get the Johnny Burnette-style *Next* Time, Run What You Brung with its catchy chorus about drinking a beer in the sun, XXX, the vengeful *The Devil* Made You. Blood Sweat And Fears with a great hiccupping vocal from Bob Butfoy, and the Batman-inspired instro Gotham, which allows the band's other star Paul Gaskin to shine on guitar. JH

#### One Of The Lonely Ones

**ROY ORBISON** 

EMI

This must-have purchase for Orbison fans is no greatest hits compilation, a re-imagining, a remix or re-anything else that record companies' use to sell stuff you already own - it's a complete unreleased album that Roy cut in 1969 for MGM when the tide of his career, but not his voice or performance, was at a low ebb. From the first cut, You'll Never Walk Alone, to the last, Roy's voice was in perfect condition, but in a world overtaken by flower power and 10-minute guitar solos, pure pop by the likes of this '50s and early '60s hitmaker were lost in the mist. The title track says it all: Roy had suffered two devastating tragedies in the vears after the worldwide



smash Pretty Woman when he lost his wife Claudette in a motorcycle accident and two years later, his two young sons in a house fire. Orbison pours out his sadness on a heart-touching ballad that says he would rather be dead and done rather than be what he had become. Particularly strong cuts here include Child-Woman, Woman-Child, Sweet Memories, and the rather odd *The Defector*. With so much Big O on the market, this LP was long overlooked - but now it's available, standing alone in an uncluttered field, so snap it up. **JH** 

#### Dion

#### NEW YORK IS MY HOME

The Orchard

There's plenty of time passed between the 22-year old Dion that stormed the hit parade with the Ernie Maresca-penned hits Runaround Sue and The Wanderer and the 76-vear old that presents us with New York Is My Home, and while the doo-wop stylings of the past are long gone, this is a fine piece of work. Aces Up Your Sleeve opens the record with a weightlessness that cloaks the poisonous woman at the heart of the lyrics and Can't Go Back To Memphis is a fine modern blues, but it is the third (title) track, a duet with Paul Simon, that nails it. Together the duo sing of their beloved city eloquently to mould a tune that is certain to be remembered. The Apollo King may appeal



most to the average Vintage Rock reader with its straight-up rock'n'roll patter that toasts the wild sax of Big Al Sears, a peerless soloist in Duke Ellington's Orchestra. The rockin' subsides to make way for a nicely subdued take on Lightnin' Hopkins' Katie Mae (Blues), before *I'm All Rocked Up* picks up the mood, favouring groove over pace. Visionary Heart reverts back to the stylings of the brooding opener, before Dion closes with the rolling blues *I Ain't For It*. Still the King of the Bronx in our book. RF



#### Walk Right Back: The Singles Collection 1956–62

**EVERLY BROTHERS** 

Jazmine

On first inspection this double disc from Jasmine's 'Singles Collection' series seems to suit the casual fan of Don and Phil's sweet harmonising since it covers their golden moments (15 million-sellers on Cadence and Warner Bros are included here), but there's plenty to draw in the more fervent supporter. Of added interest are a pair of rare UK-only flipsides and four (first time on CD) releases on Don's short-lived Calliope label, including US Top 40 The Graduation Song. RF



#### Two Legendary Albums: Rumble Rat & Rumble

**RUMBLE ON THE BEACH** 

**Bear Family** 

Founded in Bremen, West Germany in the mid-'80s, Rumble On The Beach rose through the rockabilly revival ranks to the higher echelons of the scene, in part thanks to their infamous indie hit cover of Prince's Purple Rain - both studio and a live version are here. Reactivated last year, the band celebrate their second coming with this compilation of their #6 indie debut and its muscle-flexing follow up, both top class, with the band's story in the liner notes by drummer Marc Mittelacher and some fine photos, too. RF



#### Swamp Pop By The Bayou – Troubles, Tears And Trains

**VARIOUS** 

Ace

Latest in Ace's Swamp Pop series on the mid-tempo dance music born in the late '50s in south east Louisiana. Think of your favourite rolling Fats Domino number: that equates to swamp pop. Not too many big names outside of Johnny Preston and John Fred and The Playboys, but Warren Storm, Roy Perkins and Jay Richards are fine, mainly piano-led, popsters. With notes from compiler Ian Saddler, biogs and photos, label scans and a 28 tracks, it's highly recommended. JH



#### Postcard From Paris JACKSON SLOAN AND THE DREW DAVIES COMBO

Crazy Times

The track Kickin' Up The Dust finally established jump blues and jazz singer Jackson Sloan not only in the UK but as a force on the international retro scene. He steps away from his regular band The Rhythmtones to guest with the Drew Davies Combo, a Gallic outfit, for a 12-tracker cut in France but mixed in the UK, and it's powerful stuff, opening with a nod to his hosts, C'est La Vie, and full of dancefloor-designed Jackson originals. It's easily available in the UK, and comes with the VR seal of approval. JH



#### You Don't Know: All The Hits 1961-1962

**HELEN SHAPIRO** 

Jasmine

Included here are 30 hits from teen songstress Helen Shapiro, a mere 14 years old when she first hit the scene as the ultimate child starlet. Helen harnessed a power in her voice that belied her age and served her well. Her first seven super hit 45s are here, as is the Jazzy Helen EP and the Tops With Me album - all showing a youngster brimming with a vim far beyond novelty. It's hard to believe this material was released in such a short time period, but it was two years of pop bliss. RF



#### The Way

Western Star

This neo-rockabilly outfit look like a chubby UK answer to Los Straitjackets with their Mexican wrestlers' masks, but there the similarity ends, since this lot features vocals unlike Eddie Angel's outfit. This is frantic stuff, belted out at 100mph, and likely to leave you exhausted by the end of the 13 tracks. They don't take themselves too seriously; Sixty Hunnit And Fiddy Dollars (say it out loud), Loopy Lula, Mary Go Round and Five Chin Freddy are apparent originals, while Little Demon bears only a distant relationship to Screamin' Jay Hawkins. JH

#### **Looking Good**

THE HEARTBEAT

**Foot Tapping Records** 

There's no point in reviving well-known oldies unless you add something new. To their credit, The Heartbeats, featuring well-known guitarist-about-town Lee Gocher, do precisely that. They take numbers like the Everly Brothers/Roy Orbison classic Claudette and Johnny Burnette's sublime B-side Cincinatti Fireball, give them a fresh lick of paint, and put them precisely in the rockabilly frame where they always belonged. No disrespect to the originals, but these sound better than my dusty London-American 45s. Lead singer Grant Kinscott has a great vocal approach, and numbers including Charlie Feathers' Nobody's Woman, Rick Nelson's Never Be Anyone Else But You and the



oft-recorded standard Drivin' Wheel sound just great. Guitarist Lee Gocher's fretwork throughout is stunning, and there's a couple of his originals among the 13 tracks. One niggle - why does the abominable Rickie Lee Jones get a writer credit on Robert & Johnny's immortal doo-wopper when she was still in nappies when it was a hit in 1958? But buy with confidence; you'll enjoy this one, and hopefully it will bring more attention to this consistently excellent-sounding three-piece. JH



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AMAZINGLY, IT'S BEEN A FULL 20 YEARS SINCE ROCKABILLY HERO **DEKE DICKERSON** PLAYED A LONDON STAGE, AND THE FULL HOUSE THAT GREETED HIS APPEARANCE SHOWED THE VISIT WAS LONG OVERDUE. **JOHN HOWARD** WENT ALONG...



e's a guitarist, band leader, composer, promoter, guitar maestro, music historian, writer, publisher and a general all-round good guy; Deke Dickerson may be a regular at festivals in the UK and Europe both in his own right and providing backing duties for legends, but his last show in the capital was in 1996. It was surely time to put that right – and on 7 January 2016, North London's Nambucca music pub played host.

Deke's choice of clothing can be a clue to his intended set-list. A cheese-cutter cap, and you can expect solid rock'n'roll of the Link Wray/Los Straitjackets style; in full Western gear, or indeed denim overalls, you can look forward to country and hillbilly. This time he appeared sporting his powder-blue '55 Gibson ES-295, a check shirt from Vivien of Holloway, and a straw cowboy hat, suggesting rockabilly: well, we got that, but there was plenty more besides in

Major Label means that he can play tracks he has recorded for days on end without repeating himself, but he really hit the spot with *Luther* Played The Boogie Woogie, the classic Johnny Cash cut celebrating Carl Perkins' late brother who played with Cash, and whose birthday it was that week. A lively Look At That Moon and Johnny Horton's Let's Take the Long Way Home *Tonight* kept up the pace before Deke switched styles to tell the inspiration behind Link Wray's Run Chicken Run – a song referring to the 10 minutes a chicken commonly ran around after having its head chopped off, apparently to the frequent delight of hillbillies. The guitar pyrotechnics needed to be heard to

Deke's own amusing *Misshapen Hillbilly Girl*, in which he describes himself as "the Hugh Hefner of the heifers", underlined



Deke is a practised showman, and to prove it he left the stage with microphone in hand to encourage audience members to join in with the "Heys!" before he and Thibaut switched instruments for the next tune. "He's not just a bass player," Deke explained drily, "he's also a musician." There was no doubt that this was true as Thibaut thrashed out a hardrocking instrumental.

One of the best numbers of the night was Deke's storming take on Baby Blue, in which the originator Gene Vincent came face to face with Link Wray; we hope they play it this way in heaven. I'm Going To Wear Out The Soles Of My Shoes followed, straight hillbilly, then *Too Hot* To Handle, Can't See The Forest For The Trees and Deke's version of the standard Mexicali Rose, which, on record, shades every other version, including the cut by Jerry Lee Lewis; few can out-perform The Killer, but in this contest Deke wins on points. The Appalachian vocal oddity called 'eefing' which entails singing while both breathing in and out was introduced to the London audience, who were invited to join in on Jimmy Rodgers' Mule Skinner Blues, done Fendermen-style.

Oddly, since Deke was the far bigger name, this was a show closed out by The Outta Sites, a Los Angeles band with oft-times Deke collaborator Chris Sprague on vocals, who all sported Dave Clark Five white polo necks and favoured an early '60s sound, competently and enthusiastically played.

Deke is set to return to the UK for this summer's Rockabilly Rave at Camber Sands, and the promise of another performance like this is as good a reason as any to book your tickets today.

## The 80-minute set included lashings of originals, rocking country, chat and even comedic poetry

be believed.

an 80-minute set that included lashings of Deke originals, his slant on rocking country, amusing between-song chat in his best radio-announcer baritone, and even some comedic poetry.

Nambucca is sadly distant from any tube stops but is served by any number of buses, and it's custom-designed for live music seven nights a week with a large stage, a great PA, and plenty of baffles to kill unwanted echo. Tonight, Deke – backed by French bassist Thibaut Chopin from Nico Duportal's band and British drummer/author Brian Nevill, a founder member of Deke's Ecco-Fonics in San Francisco – opened with a blistering instrumental medley that included quotes from everything from Freddie King's The Stumble to a Duane Eddy take on Peter Gunn. "I'm nervous tonight," he revealed. "Not because of the rockabilly heavyweights in the house... I just ate what I was told was a Jungle Curry, and I guess I have 23 good minutes left!"

Dickinson's back catalogue on labels as diverse as Ecco-Fonic, Hightone, and

that tonight was no place for political correctness, and this led into the standard *Snatch It 'n'Grab It*, oft-recorded by Deke and others. Jimmy Martin's hillbilly *Deep River* was given a rockabilly gloss before we were taken back to Horton for *Feelin' Low*. Deke had announced he was about to essay a country number and was surprised by the lack of a cheer, and then surprised the audience in turn with a number that had more in common with Sanford Clark than Jim Reeves.

One of Deke's own compositions had been requested, so he obliged: *Nightmare Of A Woman* is a song he recorded with Billy Zoom, and in case anyone had missed the finer points of the hilarious lyrics, he turned them into poetry as he told the tale of the woman who took him for everything, and the only thing she gave him was a disease – shades of Young Jesse's *Mary Lou. Farewell, So Long And Goodbye* was not saved for last, and this led into the upbeat *I Want To Spread It Around* (sample lyric: "a short time living and a long time in the ground").



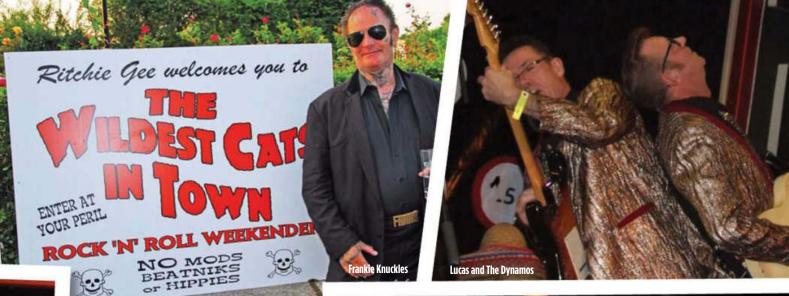






# THE MUNICIPALITY OF THE PROPERTY OF THE PROPER

ROCKY BURNETTE, TRAVIS LE DOYT, DARREL HIGHAM, SI CRANSTOUN, PAUL ANSELL, THE JETS, THE LENNEROCKERS, THE KINGCATS, LUCAS AND THE DYNAMOS, PORKY'S HOT ROCKIN'... **CHRIS WOODFORD** EMBRACED THE SEASONAL SPIRIT AT WILDEST CATS IN TOWN CHRISTMAS WEEKENDER







s usual acting as MC for the weekend, Dave 'Porky' Coates and his Hot Rockin' kickstarted Friday evening in the Ballroom. The arrival of Roy J Martin, the young piano player from Holland, has added a new dimension, so that in addition to being a 'can you bop can you boogie' band for the boppers, Hot Rockin' can now deliver boogie-woogie for the jivers and thus guarantee a full dancefloor for their entire show.

Wildest Cat favourite Si Cranstoun was next on stage featuring tracks

from the Old School CD including the rocking uptempo title track Juke Box Jump, Vegas Baby and the strolling Count On Me, which was immediately picked up by the ladies on the floor. Continuing with favourites such as 1950's Pin-Up Girl, Dynamo, Lonesome Heart Baby, Coupe De Ville and some Larry Williamsstyled 'whistling' in Slipping And Sliding, there was no doubt that Si is still firmly committed to rock'n'roll. Never one to compromise, like Fats Domino, he had a full-sized band that knew their parts, which they played to perfection, never seeking to intrude on the man upfront.

Following on, The Jets maintained the momentum with *Turn Up The Guitar*, *Rockabilly Baby*, *Let's Talk All Night* and a string of familiar numbers. Ever at ease with the crowd and confident in their own abilities, they broke off for an acapella medley of *Two Silhouettes On The Shade*, *Duke of Earl* and *Get A Job* before returning to rock and roll and a full dancefloor. A rousing *You Ain't Nothing But Fine* brought the show to a close amid long and lasting appreciation, for another superb job well done.

Friday night closed with the reformed Rhythm Aces playing on into the early hours with a fine set of Johnny Kidd and mainly British rock'n'roll.

Saturday afternoon was dominated by the much anticipated appearance of Darrel Higham & The Enforcers.

Opening with the good rocking *Hey Ruby*, his readings of *I Fell In Love* and *Dark Haired Woman* were all reminders, if any were needed, that Darrel is

Si Cranstoun is still firmly committed to rock'n'roll, and The Jets maintained the momentum



a class apart, an absolute superstar. The show continued with the Gene Vincent tribute *Jumping With Gene*, various Eddie Cochran numbers, *Rock All Night, Ghost Of Love* and a host of others from his CDs. While the crowd were jumping up and down Darrel was quietly smiling to himself, obviously pleased with the way things were going. Johnny Horton's *I'm Coming Home*, Gene Summer's *Fancy Dan* and Elvis's *Burning Love* brought this fantastic set to a rousing conclusion. But that wasn't the last of Darrel – he would be back later for a truly memorable performance backing Rocky Burnette.

In the meantime, the Rat Pack trio were on stage with their young guitar player Brandon, pleased as punch to be playing at such a prestigious venue and rubbing shoulders with the best in the business. Therein, perhaps, lies the future of rock and roll.

No one unites rock and roll and rockabilly more than Johnny Burnette, and his memory could not have been better served than by a band

#### Rocky Burnette, Darrel Higham, Porky Coates and Paul Ansell ran through the Johnny Burnette songbook

fronted by his son Rocky Burnette with Darrel Higham, 'Porky' Coates and Paul Ansell, who led the legendary No. 9 band in the 1990s. From Tear It Up and Oh Baby Babe through Honey Hush and Drinking Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee, Drinking Wine and on to Dreamin' and You're Sixteen, the show ran through the Johnny Burnette songbook. Conscious of the occasion and aware that Rocky wasn't at his best - "I don't think I'll be around as long as the Comets", he said - the band played its socks off and took the vocals whenever Rocky needed to take a breather. "I'm so pleased to be playing with the greatest players," Rocky said. "I hope I'll be able to come back. I'm not here for the money. I

owe it to you people." For the fans it was a never-to-be-forgotten occasion as wave upon wave of appreciation swept over the stage. All too soon *The Train Kept A Rollin'* closed the show with a final "Thank you everyone, God bless you" from Rocky.

Leading the way with The Dell-Vikings' Come And Go With Me, the UK Roomates had the unenviable task of following Rocky Burnette, but with a good backing band and a selection of evergreens including At The Hop, Teenager In Love (from their new CD), Baby Blue and the strolling Long John, they quickly had the audience joining the floor. Finally, and from the rockabilly end of the spectrum,

the not-for-the faint-hearted Spuny Boys rocked and rolled into the early hours of Sunday morning.

Sunday featured three of the best party bands in the business, including the Lennerockers but without their piano player – who, as leader Michael Koch explained, had gone down with cystitis, helpfully explaining that "in Germany, we call it 'pissies'." Undaunted, he took charge of the piano and despite being one man down the Lennerockers put on another extremely well-received show. With numbers like High Class Lady, Judy, Boogie Woogie Queen and Stomping With The Wildcats and with The Lennerockers Stroll added to their catalogue, it could hardly have been otherwise.

Much the same can be said of The Kingcats. Opening with *Promised Land*, *As Long As There's Loving Tonight* and Rex Allen's classic one-off *Knock Knock Rattle* and more, all underpinned by piano man Rusty Lupton, who has an enviable CV that stretches back to Matchbox in the 1970s. Last but not least of the dancers' favourites came the all-action Lucas and The Dynamos – as lively as ever, still running from side to side of the stage and still looking for those sombreros, they exude an exuberance that is impossible to resist.

Impersonators do not generally find favour, and rightly so, but there are exceptions to the rule. Danny Reno sings Roy Orbison like no one else, even when at full stretch over a four-octave range. *Pretty Woman, Blue Bayou, California Blue* and *In Dreams* are songs that mean so much to so many and which could have been ruined by a lesser artist, but they were received in almost reverential silence, with enormous appreciation

through the crowd singing numbers like Don't Be Cruel, Teddy Bear and All Shook Up. Back on stage and fully reassured he closed with Hound Dog, Love Me Tender and I'm Coming Home, and there was great applause from a packed crowd which spilled over into a release of energy in the form of a long conga line which

## Cliff and The Cavaliers rocked on into the early hours with the best of South London rock'n'roll

respectfully held back until the end of each number. Danny's own tribute to Roy, *Missing You*, was included, and is available for download.

Travis Le Droyt is another artist uncannily close to his hero. On this occasion he appeared at first to be rather unsure, ill-at-ease and more exaggerated in his movements; perhaps having just come back from a long season on the cruise ships, where he had to play to an audience that expected a Las Vegas Elvis, he was taking a while to rediscover himself (as Elvis) in the real world. But in the end he was happily re-united with the pre-1960 era and proceeded to be greeted on all sides as he went walkabout

threaded its way round the ballroom for much of the following DJ session.

The night was still young as Cliff and The Cavaliers – led by ex-Avenger Cliff Edmunds with Terry Earl on drums and David Briggs on guitar, all veterans of the scene, and with Emma Goss adding double bass – rocked on into the early hours of Monday morning with the best of South London rock'n'roll, which for many is where it all began in the 1970s revival. It was a wonderful weekend, with so many great bands, and our thanks as ever goes to Ritchie and Kathy for making these Wildest Cats weekenders so special for so many people. \*







## ONE FINAL HURRAH



## THE SHARKS ARE NO MORE. VINCE EAGER TRACES THEIR LAST TRIUMPHANT TOUR

he Sharks were well-named.
Formed in the late '70s,
they explored an original
rockabilly sound, recording
1982's Phantom Rockers, and
becoming a sleek and lethal
neo-rockabilly outfit that left
a spectacular bite-mark on the genre that
would be known as psychobilly. Though
they split soon afterwards, they reformed
in 1993, first releasing Recreational Killer,
then Colour My Flesh in 1995.

Three widely-spaced EPs followed, but founder member and singer-guitarist Alan Wilson was now busy with his Western Star record label and studio, and for a number of years he, bass player Steve Whitehouse and drummer Paul Hodges hardly communicated. But there was a ripple in the water. Every year for 15 years, Alan received a phone call

in the town of Speyer. The gig was a massive success and on returning to their dressing room following their performance, three separate promoters from Russia, Los Angeles and Brazil offered the boys a number of dates over the following two years.

Still in a euphoric mood, they decided to take them up on the offers, but this could never be the cue for a full-blown reunion. The presence of Alan's American wife Lindsay and their daughter Ava, plus the growing popularity of his Western Star recording label had taken over as his main priorities in life, and his inevitably waning wanderlust prompted him to make the decision that the 2015 tour would herald The Sharks' final bite of the psychobilly cherry. But still, although these overseas dates were to herald the end of The Sharks, at least they would

five-date Japan tour, a visit to Rock At Sea in Stockholm, and finally Los Angeles.

The Sharks gave a lot of thought to their planned visit to Pineda in Spain as it was here two years earlier they had to follow an amazing performance by the Dutch psychobilly band Batmobile. That time, determined to make it a memorable night, Alan decided to crowd surf. Launching himself onto the sea of crewcuts and tattoos, he went flying over their heads and shoulders as the crowd parted like the Red Sea and he landed ignominiously on the floor surrounded by trainers and Doc Martins.

Two years later he decided to take it one stage further. Plotting with bassist Steve Whitehouse to ensure a safer landing the second time around, Alan purchased two £20 children's dinghies. Holding the dinghies to their backs, the pair launched themselves feet-first upon the 4.000 adoring fans who, this time, got the drift of what they were supposed to do and caught them with octopuslike tentacles on a sea of adoration. The Sharks were bathed in glory!

The Japanese leg of the tour was to become the jewel in the crown with

## Though they were to herald the end, these dates would ensure the band went out with a big splash

from the German promoter known as 'Lonesome', owner of the top German promotions company Mental Hell, who was desperate to book The Sharks. For 14 years he phoned and received a negative answer; on the fifteenth he struck lucky, for Alan decided this could prove to be an ideal opportunity to launch a new album by The Sharks, full of brand-new songs, called *Infamy*.

So to Germany. Top hotels, guitar techs, roadies and story-seeking journalists greeted them on their arrival

ensure the band went out with a big splash for the fans.

Commitments by all the groups members stood in the way of any dedicated rehearsing prior to the 2015 tour, so a date in Weston Super Mare acted as a public rehearsal and proved to be the curtain-raiser for their 35,000 mile journey to Potsdam in Germany, Pori in Finland, Pineda in Spain, the Sjock festival in Belgium, Rugby and Northampton back in the home country, and Milan. Then would come a compact





five sell-out shows in six days and 2,500 miles of travel with almost Beatle-like receptions. The fans had waited over 30 years for the return of their psychobilly heroes and they were determined to make the most of it. Sold-out venues necessitated that a second afternoon show be wedged into their already hectic schedule, and the group spent most of their time autographing their first Japanese 12" vinyl release from 1982.

places of three of their rockabilly heroes - Eddie Cochran, Gene Vincent, and Johnny Burnette.

Their four days in Los Angeles proved to be much more of an emotionally testing time than the intrepid trio had anticipated. Tickets for their final show could have been sold twice over as fans arrived not only from as far away as Chicago but also from overseas. Their common quest to see the Sharks

humility. "I just couldn't believe the reception we received from the audience and I was lost for words", he said afterwards. An hour and a half later. The Sharks' last-ever performance concluded with a rendition of *Hooker*. They've hooked many fans during their 30-year reign, and we're all still wondering if it's yet safe to go back in the water. \*

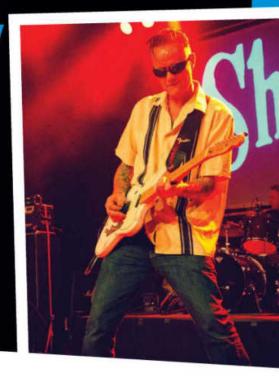
## The fans' common quest to see The Sharks performing one last time left the group speechless

The Sharks' penultimate gig was an unusual one, to say the least, as it took place on a ship on the high seas off Sweden. Spending 24 hours at sea with continual extremely loud psychobilly music being broadcast in every area of the ship, including corridors and cabins, convinced the intrepid trio that perhaps their decision to call it a day was the correct one after all.

The Seaport Marina Hotel Los Angeles was the venue for The Sharks' last ever performance. They had played LA two years earlier at the Ink-N-Iron Festival, where their success guaranteed a sell-out for any future visits. Not only were the

performing one last time left the group speechless when they realised the impact their music had had on fans worldwide during the previous 30-plus years.

It was 11.30pm on Saturday 21st November 2015, and a wave of euphoria greeted the last-ever introduction of The Sharks. Alan's reaction to the welcome from the packed venue was one of





## A Life in Rock'n'Roll

pitalgate Airfield on the southeast borders of my hometown of Grantham in Lincolnshire had been a base for training Oxford aircraft pilots and a target for the Luftwaffe who would pay them regular visits during WWII. But it was after the war that the base became a target for the testosteronedriven young men of Grantham when it was converted into a WRAF Station where young women recruits would get their first taste of life away from the scrutiny of their parents as they trained to become 'Snowdrops', or RAF policewomen. Following their 'passingout' ceremony, the girls would escape the base to celebrate in the town centre, where the local lads would gather in eager anticipation. Grantham's nightlife took a definite turn for the better with the arrival of the girls in blue, and Friday nights were never to be the same again.

Johnny Fryer was a Grantham taxi proprietor, driving instructor and good friend, and he told me that if I wanted to take my driving test at short notice, I was to let him know 24 hours in advance and he would advise one of his pupils that they were not quite ready – and switch the test to me. When I was ready, I let Johnny know a day before and sure enough all was arranged.

Everything went according to plan, and I had a pretty good idea upon meeting the examiner prior to my test that I would be a first-time passer, as the first question he asked me was: "When the test is over, would you sign a photograph for my daughter and the girls in the office?" The girls were at that very moment waving and blowing kisses from the office window. How could I say no?

Johnny used his initiative to turn our friendship into a profitable advantage. Being the main supplier of taxis transferring the girls from RAF Spitalgate to Grantham town centre, he had the



idea that he could throw in a detour and charge sixpence extra to go via my parents' house – a 'Vince Eager sleeps here' type tour. Fridays were usually busy days in London for me, as I would be rehearsing for TV shows to be aired the following evening. Consequently, I was not often in Grantham when the taxis full of WRAFs in civvies pulled up outside my parents' house. But if I was at home, Johnny would encourage me to say hello, sign autographs and pose for pictures.

It was during a meet-and-greet with some of the WRAFs outside my parents' house that I met a young lady by the name of Kathy. Not only did she have a great personality, she also had a lovely Scottish accent, and thankfully my road manager Noel picked up on the chemistry and arranged a date.

Additional journeys to Grantham to meet up with Kathy soon gave the game away as to my feelings for her, and it was a relationship I thought would go somewhere – that is, until I met Kathy's Aunt Mary.

It was during one of our regular visits to Scotland that I first met Mary, the whisky-drinking, chain-smoking, bible-bashing Auntie who lived with Kathy's family in South Edinburgh – and she was not a lady not to mess with.

Aunt Mary's immediate response to my arrival at the family home, 10 minutes from my Edinburgh digs, was to grill me about my religion. On discovering that most of my formative years had been spent in the pews as a Church of England chorister, her quest began to turn me towards Catholicism with statements such as, 'You and our Kathy would make a lovely couple, but you must become a Catholic first.'

As intense as she was about converting me, she was a fun lady who appeared to enjoy life to the full, and her ability to smoke and drink with the best of them had endeared her my group The Quiet Three so much so that they, possibly under the influence, invited her to travel with us to a gig in Ardrossan on the west coast, a 150-mile round trip from

## MORE TALES OF DERRING-DO WITH **VINCE EAGER** FROM THE EARLY DAYS OF BRITISH ROCK — A GIRLFRIEND'S SURPRISING AUNTIE, THE GREAT FISH AND CHIPS DASH, AND THE TALE OF SOME VERY PUBLIC EMBARRASSMENT COURTESY OF WEE WILLIE HARRIS...

Edinburgh. With my road manager Noel driving and Kathy and I as passengers in the front, we set off on the return leg from Ardrossan. The show had gone really well and everyone was in high spirits – Aunt Mary especially so.

When driving at night, Noel would always close the partition between the driver's area in the front and the passenger's area in the back. As well as keeping the driver's cab dark, it would also isolate my group and the mischief they got up to – mischief, which, at times was best, they kept to themselves. The noise from the back of the van following shows usually abated once the adrenalin levels had returned to normal and the post-show booze had kicked in.

As I sat with my arm around a sleeping Kathy while listening to Radio Luxembourg, I was aware of some unusual sounds from the back of the bus. Trying not to disturb Kathy, I gently pulled back the corner of the partition to reveal the reason. There, under the soft lighting of the passenger area, and wearing nothing but a smile and her underwear, was Aunt Mary, doing things with the band, all of whom were in various stages of undress, that I wouldn't be telling my mother about any time soon, and certainly didn't want Kathy to see.

Slowly returning the partition to its original position and then mouthing to Noel to increase the radio volume, I held Kathy a little closer in the hope that she wouldn't wake before reaching Edinburgh.

With the lights of Edinburgh drawing closer, I gingerly turned back the partition to reveal all the occupants in the rear of the bus looking more comatose than asleep, but at least they appeared fully dressed.

As we opened the side door of the mini bus, Aunt Mary almost fell out but just managed to retrieve her footing before staggering up the garden path, never to be seen again. Kathy was much more the lady. Thanking me and kissing me goodnight, she walked gracefully up the garden path. I did see Kathy again, but the fact that she was being posted to a WRAF station far away, together with the lingering images of Aunt Mary in the back of the bus and the theological ear-bashing she gave me, meant that my pursuance of the lovely Scottish lassie became a little less eager.

Following another visit to Scotland, where Joe Brown and I had appeared in Glasgow for a week at the Metropole Theatre, we were in Joe and his mum's basement flat on the following Monday with Joe's mum and Billy Fury. The flat was situated in the basement of a building in Paddington that also housed yours truly on the ground floor and Billy on the first floor. Joe's mother was a tough East End lady who took no prisoners, yet she was the most generous and fun person you could ever wish to meet.

Making sure we wouldn't go hungry was always of great concern to Mrs Brown, and as a regular occurrence she would ask us if we'd eaten lately, or would we like something. Joe's immediate response was, "I'd luv some of them bleedin' fish and chips we 'ad in Glasgow last week, Vince. They were friggin' marvellous!" "Well, you ain't getting any from me so you'd better bleedin' fink again," replied Mrs Brown, tartly. "Okay," said I, "C'mon Bill... let's go and get some."

With that, we were soon standing alongside Billy's lovely light blue MG sportscar. I told Bill I knew of a great fish and chip shop, so I would drive. Shortly after setting off, Billy's face was a picture as I told him it was the fish and chip shop Joe and I had frequented in Glasgow the week before that I was heading for. He laughed and told me I was nuts, but he was up for it.

Twenty hours later, and having shared approximately 800 miles of driving under our belts, Billy and I arrived back in Paddington in Mrs Brown's kitchen. Clutching a newspaper-wrapped parcel

"Wee Willie Harris's management decided to change his hair colour every few weeks to match his jackets, and the media became infatuated"





of stone-cold fish and chips, we dropped them on the table and said, "there you go Mrs Brown. There's your fish and chips."

Obviously, with Joe's mum not believing a single word we'd said, we told her to check the newspaper. We'd wrapped them in the previous day's local Glasgow rag complete with date, proving that we had actually been to Glasgow to buy fish and chips.

Hanging out at the 2i's coffee bar was never dull, especially when Wee Willie Harris was around. Willie was managed by Les Bristow, an ex-wrestler and a Cockney to the core. He had masterminded Wee Willie's overseas success in Europe and South America, and would always accompany Willie on his trips. It was on his return from one trip to the Lido in Venice, Italy, where Willie had become a major attraction, that Les so nearly came to a sticky end at the hands of his long-suffering wife Norah, who was the manageress of a restaurant near the 2i's Coffee Bar in Old Compton Street in London.

Having returned from Venice late the previous day, Les had slept in and Norah had gone to the restaurant in the morning to prepare for the lunchtime trade. Les had a relaxing day at home and went to the West End in the evening to have dinner at Norah's restaurant. En route he called into the 2i's and invited me to join him. As Les opened the restaurant door we were greeted with a much more hostile reception than anticipated as

Norah, who was entrenched behind the espresso machine, began hurling dinner plates at us. The hurling of each plate was accompanied by a tirade of expletives as she vented her fury on Les for having brought home from Italy, as she poetically referred to it as, "a dose of the \*\*\*\*ing crabs!" Our defence was to beat a hasty retreat to the 2i's, where Les was hoping to find sanctuary and sympathy from the regulars. Unfortunately, Norah had phoned the 2i's ahead of Les' arrival and warned the manager to keep his and his staff's opinions to themselves, otherwise their fate would be similar to that Les and I had received. Everyone knew of Norah's temper and determination, and decided to err on the side of caution.

In an attempt to exonerate himself of any misdemeanour on his part, Les endeavoured to blame the 'dose' on a onenight stand with a showgirl at The Lido in Venice who had spiked his drink. He then began making enquiries as to how he could rid himself of the crabs. His first reaction was to phone a doctor friend of the owner of the 2i's, Paul Lincoln, who was used to treating Paul's wrestlers, and a man who was not averse to twisting the truth if it served his purpose, or those close to him. "Blue Unction, Les, that's what you need," the doc advised Les. You can get it from the all-night chemist in Piccadilly Circus."

With that, Les and I stepped out and headed in the direction of Piccadilly Circus and the all-night chemist. It was

about 9pm and the chemist's was a hive of activity. Les knew many of the people in the West End who worked the night shift and the chemist's shop was no exception.

Upon our arrival, Les approached an assistant he knew and whispered what he hoped were the magic words in his ear, "Blue Unction." The assistant took one step back, looked across the crowded shop floor and shouted to the colleague furthest away, "Can you bring me a bottle of Blue Unction?" With a face as red as the Blue Unction was blue, Les shouted across to the assistant, "Yeah, I've got a dose of the \*\*\*\*ing crabs!" The shoppers erupted into fits of laughter as Les tried to cover his embarrassment by making a speedy exit.

Les later declared that he thought Norah had tipped off Wee Willie Harris as to what was happening, and subsequently Willie clocked it all through the chemists window then did a runner so not to be spotted.

Initially Wee Willie got the most publicity out of all of us rockers as he used to wear vividly-coloured Teddy Boy drape jackets with his name emblazoned on the back in bold lettering. The lettering was a reflection on his manager and promoters as they came from the wrestling fraternity and had their names on the back of their robes and dressing gowns. Not content with shocking the public and press with his antics and ever-changing bright jackets, Willie's management decided to change his hair colour every two weeks to match them. The consequence was that the media became infatuated with Willie's seeming obsession with colours.

Media outlets such as television, most magazines and the Pathe Cinema News were all in black and white, so you would think that Wee Willie changing his hair colour every couple of weeks to match the colour of his jackets wouldn't be news-worthy due to the photographs only being published in varying tones of grey and not in colour. But no! Every couple of weeks for a few months Willie would feature in magazines and movie and television news sporting different shades of grey jackets and grey hair, which would then be described as a vivid pink, green, blue, or whatever colour the reporters came up with. I thought it was pure genius, and I'm convinced to this day that the coverage Willie received was the consequence of a few back-handers being dealt out by Les. \*

#### "It was on his return from Italy that Wee Willie's manager Les nearly came to a sticky end"

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## Soundtrack Of My Life



#### Linda Gail Lewis



Of course brother Jerry Lee always will be an endless source of inspiration, but great rock'n'roll numbers by other artists also moved **Linda Gail Lewis** to return to singing and showed her that "a woman can rock like a man". Linda's new album *Hard Rockin' Woman* is out now on Lanark Records.

#### WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN' GOIN' ON

#### **JERRY LEE LEWIS**

I first heard this when I was 10, and I felt the groove. It made me want to get up and cance!
-Seeing my brother do this on *The Steve Allen Show* was fantastic. I can't tell you how our family



felt when we saw Jerry rockin' on national TV. We went from a river bank at Black River, Louisiana to my Aunt Stella and Uncle Lee's home in Ferriday to watch it – they had a better TV than we did! This Sun single will always be my favourite rock'n'roll record. I have wonderful memories from that time... moving to a beautiful new home, driving away in a brand new Cadillac. So much happened when this hit the charts. Jerry told Mama he wanted to share everything he had with us, and he always did.

#### **ROCKIN' MY LIFE AWAY**

#### **JERRY LEE LEWIS**

This record came out during my retirement from showbusiness. I heard it on the radio and knew I had to get back on the road again. It really moved me and made me realise that rock'n'roll is a big part of my life. You can tell that it



was cut live on the floor, just the way Jerry always cuts his songs. It's one of my favourite Jerry Lee Lewis records of all. So I was listening to this in my car and thinking about how much I missed recording, performing and travelling. The best way to listen to this is turned up really loud. So that's what I did... cranked it up and sat rockin' in my car seat while driving in Memphis.

#### **POOR BOY**

#### **ELVIS PRESLEY**

This is from the Love
Me Tender EP. I love
this song. It rocks. It
can also make a poor
girl feel good. When I
learned it, we didn't have
a whole lot. Those were
the days when Daddy



was a sharecropper. I learned this song and won a whole bunch of talent contests singing it. I didn't change it to 'poor girl' – I sang Elvis' lyrics and I loved it like that, and so did the judges from the talent contests. It's Elvis at his best and it brings back nice memories from those talent shows. I had terrible stage fright but once I started singing *Poor Boy*, I just felt great. This song may have caused me to become a hopeless romantic! It plainly says in a rockin' kind of way that love can make you happy. It brought me a lot of happiness in those days.

#### A FOOL SUCH AS I

#### **ELVIS PRESLEY**

I picked this recording because I've always loved it. It takes me back to a time when I was young and the world was a different place. Life was much simpler! The Hank Snow version is good, but Elvis' recording made me fall in love with the song. Ray Walker sang bass on it, and it's a wonderful



track. I had the honour of having bass singer Ingemar Wallén of the legendary Swedish group The Boppers sing with me on the song. We were touring with Micke Finell of Rock Around The Clock Productions in Sweden. It was so much fun, going back in time for a while and remembering that time in my life.

#### **JOHNNY B GOODE**

#### **CHUCK BERRY**

Chuck Berry is such a genius. He's written so many great rock'n'roll songs it's hard to pick a favourite, but *Johnny B Goode* is the one for me. It's rock'n'roll, but rock'n'roll with a country flavour. This song has been an important part of my life. I've stood backstage and watched him play it and



duckwalk across the stage – just wonderful. And it's my favourite guitar intro too! Rock'n'roll would not be what it is today without Chuck Berry. I get so many complaints from band members about doing it, but I've been including it in my set for all the years I've been performing – and I plan to continue to do it for as long as I am on stage.

#### SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL

#### **BIG JOE TURNER**

When I was living in Wales I was playing a lot of rock'n'roll gigs. Everyone dressed in drapes with the ladies in '50s-style dresses, some with petticoats. They would twirl around with their partners, jiving for hours. The atmosphere was incredible.



I'd watch the dancers, then play and sing for an hour. It was a lot of fun. One of the most popular tracks was *Shake Rattle And Roll*. I knew the Bill Haley version, and Fats Domino did it when we toured with him in 1986, but the Big Joe version has a wonderful groove. I'd been touring with Van Morrison for a year, then I put my shows back on and started playing again. It was a wonderful time. Playing for rock'n'roll fans all over the UK... it was great!

"JERRY SINGS ROCK & ROLL TIME WITH **SO MUCH FEELING**. ALL OF US WHO LOVE ROCK'N'ROLL ARE **LIVING ON ROCK'N'ROLL TIME**"

#### **LET'S HAVE A PARTY**

#### **WANDA JACKSON**

In 1987 I went home and visited my friends Bob and Kittra Moore. Bob handed me the 45 of *Let's Have A Party* – and my musical life changed. I met Wanda during the Silk Cut Festival tour. We had breakfast every morning! She's a warm, friendly lady and I became very fond of her. When I saw her



Soundtrack Of My Life

live I had no idea what to expect. This kind, sweet lady turned into a real rocker! She walked up to the mic and growled "Some people like to rock, some people like to roll..." Wow! It was amazing. Right then I realised a woman can rock like a man. The way I sing rock'n'roll changed forever. I go and hear her every chance I get.

#### **BLUE MONDAY**

#### **FATS DOMINO**

New Orleans is a party town – when you arrive, you just want to have a good time. I would always go to Pat O'Briens, listen to Barbara Bennett and knock back a Hurricane... it only takes one, and then you're off to the races! This track reminds me of the great times I've had in New



Orleans, and it's Fats Domino at his best. This is a great song – what a groove, and great lyrics too: "Sunday morning my head is bad / But it's worth it for the fun that I had". Like many of his recordings, this has great horn players and horn arrangements. It brings back memories of the three-month tour Jerry Lee Lewis did with him in 1986. Memories of fun in New Orleans, and of the Jerry Lee and Fats tour.

#### OLD TIME ROCK'N'ROLL

#### **BOB SEGER**

I was in retirement when this came out in 1979. The lyrics describe how I feel about rock'n'roll. This was the year my daughter Annie Marie was born. I was a housewife and stayed home a lot, but I'd turn on the radio and crank it up loud.



When this came on, I cranked it up even louder! When I started out in Memphis, we did this one a lot. If you wanted to fill up a dance floor, whether in a fancy place or a dive, all you had to do was play this song – everybody loved it. It was part of my show for a long time, and I still do it occasionally. What a great track!

#### **ROCK & ROLL TIME**

#### **JERRY LEE LEWIS**

This is by one of the greatest songwriters of our time, Kris Kristofferson, and Jerry sings it with so much feeling, like a 20-year old, and the piano is great. I have this on my phone and listen to it almost every day. This describes what we are



all doing. All of us who love rock'n'roll are living on rock'n'roll time. This is a great time in my life, and this is the track I have for this time. I'm living on rock'n'roll time in these golden years.

## January with his version of Singing The Blues, but he also starred in his own life story on the big screen, The Tommy Steele Story. On top of that, he went to the rock'n'roll hangout The Breadbasket Coffee House in Cleveland Street, Central top of the charts in July with his LP of the same name, and was the first British ODA British teen idol Tommy Steele larks around with some friends at the popular London. Steele was riding high in 1957; not only did he score a #1 single in act to achieve this feat following the UK album chart's inception in July 1956. **TOMMY STEELE AND FRIENDS - 1957** © Getty Images 114 VINTAGE ROCK ISSUE 22



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